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ABSTRACT

In a study of the grading practices at Bridgewater State College, three research projects were conducted: (1) a questionnaire that compared faculty perception of grading in 1976 with their perceptions in a similar questionnaire in 1972; (2) a questionnaire for students adapted from the faculty questionnaire; and (3) a survey of the academic departments on three questions on grading of concern to the academic dean. The faculty and students both supported the concepts that grading is a significant responsibility of the faculty and that grades motivate students. Two-thirds of the faculty believed that their grading practices are not consistent with the grading pattern of the college. The students supported the extension of pass-fail while the faculty did not. Although the students rejected rigorous criteria for honors, the faculty supported them. The faculty almost unanimously concurred with the current catalog definitions of the grades and the students generally agreed that these definitions were followed in practice. The faculty emphasized standards as the chief criterion in determining course grades, though in lower division courses they did take effort into account. The students strongly supported effort and the completion of certain amounts of work as the most important criteria. In the application of course grades the students most strongly supported grade descriptions that emphasized effort and the full use of one's ability. The faculty, on the other hand, generally selected the descriptions that related the student's performance to the other members of the class. (Author/SPG)

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A MAJOR APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT
PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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The road to this study began with my loving parents who instilled a respect for the value of an education. It has been completed with the patient and untiring sharing of my wife Helen in the countless trials that had to be overcome to reach this moment. I am particularly proud to share it with her and Teddy and Colleen.

Abstract of a Major Applied Research Project Presented
to Nova University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT AND FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD GRADING PRACTICES IN RELATION TO STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTERING STUDENTS AND ATTRITION

By

Edmund J. Haughey

May, 1977

The grading practices of Bridgewater State College have been a cause of concern since September of 1968 when the Faculty Council voted to examine marks and marking at the college. Discussions have taken place in the Council over the years without any definitive action until on April 24, 1976 the Council voted to defer further considerations on grading and honors until the academic year 1976-77 when the Council could consider the findings of the college committees. The present study sought to obtain the necessary input from both students and faculty so that the committees involved in the grading discussions would have the appropriate data on which to base their recommendations.

Three research projects were conducted for this study. The first project was a questionnaire which compared faculty perceptions of grading in 1976 with their perceptions in a similar questionnaire in 1972. The faculty questionnaire was distributed to all members of the instructional faculty and department chairpersons with returns from 119 of a possible 201 in 1976 and 96 of a possible 196 in 1972. When the results of the questionnaires were tabulated, Chi-square tests were used to compare the

distribution of the faculty responses in 1972 and 1976 at the .05 level of significance.

The second project was a comparison of current faculty and student perceptions on grading. The faculty questionnaire was adapted for use by the students and was pretested on two occasions. The student questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 100 from each of the four classes. When the results of the questionnaires were tabulated Chi-square tests were used to compare the distributions of the responses of the faculty and students for the 1976 questionnaire at the .05 level of significance. The third project was a survey of the academic departments on three questions on grading of concern to the Academic Dean. Each department held a meeting and submitted their responses which were incorporated into this study.

The findings provide an insight into the attitudes of the faculty and students on grading and honors. The faculty and students both supported the concepts that grading is a significant responsibility of the faculty and that grades motivate students. Two thirds of the faculty believed that their grading practices are not consistent with the grading pattern of the college. The students supported the extension of pass-fail while the faculty did not. Although the students rejected rigorous criteria for honors the faculty supported them.

The faculty, almost unanimously, concurred with the current catalog definitions of the grades and the students generally agreed that these definitions were followed in practice. The faculty emphasized standards as the chief criterion in determining course grades, though in lower division courses they did take effort into account. The students strongly supported effort and the completion of certain amounts of work as the most

important criteria. In the application of course grades the students most strongly supported grade descriptions which emphasized effort and the full use of one's ability. The faculty, on the other hand, generally selected the descriptions which related the student's performance to the other members of the class.

Four recommendations were made to the Faculty Council. First, it was recommended that a joint faculty-student committee be established to examine the differences of opinion on grading and honors, to study the need for modifications of the present system and to make any necessary recommendations to the Faculty Council. Second, it was recommended that the expansion of pass-fail be left to the discretion of the departments. Third, it was recommended that the joint faculty-student committee establish a fixed percentage for honors in each department. The requirements for the attainment of honors should be determined by the departments themselves. Fourth, it was recommended that the college adopt the use of "The Relative Transcript".

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I

Statement of the Problem

The higher educational community in the United States has evidenced concern about the higher grades awarded to students over the past ten to fifteen years. The Chronicle of Higher Education for May 19, 1976 cited a grade study of 197 institutions conducted by Michigan State University. It found that since 1960 grade point averages have risen about one half of a letter grade. A follow-up study by Professor Juola in 1976 showed that grade point averages declined for the first time in ten years, due, he, believes, to a deepened concern in colleges over grade inflation.

Although grading practices have long been controverted within academic circles, the rising grade pattern of recent years has accentuated the discussion. Arthur provides an excellent summary of the factors that have been cited in the national trend toward higher grades.

1. the psychological theory that student performance can be improved by non-punitive evaluation procedures;
2. the sociological assumption that a grade reflects an evaluation of the students as persons;
3. theories of knowledge that emphasize the subjective nature of truth;
4. changes in teaching method from authoritarian to more democratic styles;
5. the increase in the number of process and performance courses, independent study projects, non-traditional courses, etc.
6. the desire of teachers to attract students especially in areas where "required" courses have been eliminated. (Arthur, 1974, p. 2.)

Juola (1976) believes that the forces leading to grade inflation are evasive and difficult to verify. However, he cites the following factors in addition to those cited by Arthur: problems in recruitment and retention in a period of decreasing enrollments, critical comments about traditional grades being insufficiently precise and inclusive, societal concerns for the culturally disadvantaged, and perhaps a more permissive general societal movement with more concern for individual rights and feelings in contrast to fulfillment of societal and institutional goals. He suggests that the trend toward increased use of mastery models for evaluation is a recent influence as practiced in objective-based instruction, learning modules or contract teaching. Thus, the basis for the grade itself posits a source of conflict because the grade which has traditionally signified relative excellence now emphasizes factors such as the number of identified products, degrees of progress, sincerity of effort and the like.

With grades rising as well as the number of graduates receiving honors the Bridgewater State College administration and faculty became concerned and initiated steps to ameliorate the problem. The present study is intended to provide the necessary information needed by Committee A of the Faculty Council to make recommendations on honors and grading. This chapter will describe the problems of the college in this regard, the actions taken up to the present, and the intent and scope of this study.

The underlying assumption of this study is the notion that the concern of the administration and faculty regarding the grading system and honors be addressed. Their discussions have covered several years and it has been the feeling of the Faculty Council that some action be taken this year. This study is an attempt to provide informed input to the discussion

on two levels. First, it will document the letter grade, honors and attrition percentages for the college in recent years. Second, it will detail the attitudes of the faculty and students on grading and honors. It was assumed that both faculty and students have strong convictions on these matters and that it was important that both participate in providing information on which action could be taken. The faculty participated in departmental meetings on evaluation and grading and along with the students responded to the questionnaire of this study. Their good will in taking the time to participate reinforced the assumption of their convictions.

History of the Problem

The discussion of the problem began in September 1968 when the Faculty Council voted to examine marks and marking at Bridgewater State College. (Council Minutes 1968) On January 13, 1969 a preliminary report was submitted to the Council which showed marked variation in grading between and among departments. (Council Minutes 1969) In a questionnaire distributed to the faculty with a response by 102 of 174 members of the faculty, 45 percent of the faculty indicated they graded on an absolute basis in which the student's knowledge was compared to specific knowledge that the faculty member believed should be obtained for the course, 54 percent indicated they used different standards of grading for general survey courses. Of the same group 59 percent felt the college should institute a pass-fail system. (Council Committee A 1969) Three studies were conducted by the AAUP Grade/Study Committee on the spring grades in 1969, 1971 and 1972. In May of 1972 a new questionnaire was sent to 196 faculty with returns from 96. Again, the majority of the faculty responding indicated they grade on an absolute basis and were generally

satisfied with the grading system.

The chairman of the AAUP Grade/Study Committee appeared before the Faculty Council on January 29, 1973. She was questioned whether it was correct to assume since grades were going up standards were going down. Her answer was that the committee had not made such an assumption. The Faculty Council voted to accept recommendation #1 of the AAUP Committee that the administration undertake on a regular basis the publication of departmental grading graphs. Such graphs were to be widely distributed to the faculty so that the individual instructor could consider his own grades in relation to those of his colleagues.

The second recommendation of the AAUP Committee to the Faculty Council was:

> That the administration undertake a survey of grades given in the past several years to determine those courses in which 90% or more of the grades fall habitually under no more than two letters (A's and B's, B's and C's, etc.). Assuming that the five letter grade system does not function well for such courses, we recommend that these courses be considered for some alternate form of grading. (perhaps pass/fail)

In the discussion on the recommendation it was pointed out that it called not for uniform grades but uniform standards. Several members of the Council cited specific instances within their divisions where circumstances yielded normally higher grades because of higher competence of upper level students. The Faculty Council voted down the recommendation 13 to 0. (Council, 1973, p.6)

Statistical studies conducted during the past eight years produced some surprising results. The letter grades of the Bridgewater students went up and were accompanied by a rise in the number of students graduating with honors. In contrast, the admissions data, as measured by the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, indicated that the caliber of the students

declined. In addition, the number of students academically separated had increased. (Tables 1 to 4)

Table 1. Percentage of Letter Grades Awarded in the Spring Semester at Bridgewater State College in Selected Years, 1969 to 1976.

Year	A	B	C	D	E
1969	18	42	31	7	2
1971	23	39	27	8	3
1972	25	40	24	8	3
1974	31	37	19	6	3
1975	30	35	21	6	4
1976	26	36	23	6	4

As may be seen in Table 1 the percentage of "A" grades in the five years prior to the leveling off of the grades rose 74 percent while the "C" grades declined 36 percent. The grades from the spring semester were chosen because the previous faculty questionnaires were based on spring semester grades. The years 1970 and 1973 were not included because they were not part of the previous studies and were not available. While the grades began to level off in 1975 the pattern in 1976 would seem to reflect the national trend. This may have occurred as a result of the discussion and attention drawn to the problem.

Table 2. Percentage of Students Awarded Honors at Bridgewater State College Graduation from 1967 to 1976.

1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
9	4	6	7	11	15	12	15	22	23

The increase in the percentage of honor graduates may be seen in. Table 2. Unlike the Table on letter grades the information for this Table

was available for a ten year period during which the number of graduates rose from 360 to 800. The percentage increase of honors for the ten year period was 55 percent. It might be noted that there has been no change in academic requirements for earning honors which might explain this rise.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of SAT Scores of Entering Freshmen from 1967 to 1975.

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
V 500+	49	46	39	48	43	40	34	33	17
V 499-	50	53	60	51	57	59	65	67	82
M 500+	61	61	55	60	59	55	56	44	32
M 499-	38	38	44	39	39	45	44	55	67

Table 3 clearly reflects the decline in the SAT scores of entering freshmen over the last 10 years. In 1967, 49 percent of the entering freshmen scored at 500 or better on the verbal and 61 percent scored at 500 or better on the mathematics, by 1975 these figures had declined to 17 percent on the verbal and 32 percent on the mathematics. These figures would seem to reflect the effect of the trustee policy that higher educational opportunities be extended to the greatest possible number of students of all ages.

Table 4. Percentage of Students Leaving Bridgewater State College from 1973 to 1976.

	Attrition for All Reasons	Academic Separations
1973	17.1	5.1
1974	19.4	5.3
1975	19.4	7.3
1976	26.7	9.4

Table 4 was developed by using data from the offices of the Academic Dean, Admissions, and Registrar from 1973 to 1976. These years were chosen because the information on academic separations was available only from 1973 on. An analysis of student attrition reveals two major findings: the first, that overall attrition had increased from 17 percent to 26 percent and the second, that academic separations have almost doubled. It is significant to note that the 26.7 percent who left for one reason or another represented 1248 students and the 9.4 percent represented 440 academically separated students. These figures become particularly noteworthy when it is recalled that this increase in attrition was occurring when 61 percent or better of the students were receiving A or B grades. (Table 1, p.5)

Faced with these considerations the Faculty Council made the following recommendation: first, that Committee A determine whether any action can be initiated by the Council in this regard; second, that a full and open discussion of the grading trends take place in a special meeting of each department (Council 1975); third, that the Academic Standing Committee make recommendations on the standards for honors. (Council 1976)

The Academic Standing Committee recommended that graduation honors be restricted to the top 6 percent of the class. They based their recommendations on the need to restore the prestige inherent in honors while recognizing the problem presented by the inverse relationship between SAT scores and Honor students at graduation. (Tables 2 and 3) The Faculty Council voted to reject the honors recommendations and to defer further considerations on grading and honors until the academic year 1976-77 when Committee A could report its findings.

Additionally, it should be noted that committee recommendations to

extend pass-fail have not come to a vote. There has been a division among the faculty as to whether the option should be extended to performance areas such as student teaching. Indeed, the certification requirements for Special Education based on competency make this an important issue. Finally, present economic conditions in Massachusetts have resulted in larger classes which the faculty perceive as creating assessment practices that are less desirable, e.g., objective type final exams which may be machine scored.

Major Issues

The preceding pages trace the context in which this study may be understood. This study attempted to determine the degree of agreement and disagreement between the faculty in 1972 and 1976 and the faculty and students in 1976 in answering the following questions.

1. Should the current grading system be modified?
2. Are the institutional definitions of the grades acceptable to the faculty; do the students believe the faculty practice them?
3. How are particular course grades applied?
4. What should be the criteria for determining course grades?
5. Are extrinsic conditions affecting the grades given by the faculty?
6. Should the very limited pass-fail option be extended?
7. Should more rigorous standards be imposed for honors?

In addition, this study will consider the faculty responses to these additional aspects of the grading problem.

1. Does the department concur in the official grading

system of the college which presupposes a differentiated grading system based on criteria for evaluation?

2. In courses offered in multiple sections should there be agreement among the faculty teaching the course as to the nature and extent of evaluation as well as to the criteria to be used in making an evaluation?
3. Should some kind of evaluation of the student's performance in each class be made prior to mid-semester? To what extent does mid-semester evaluation take place in each department?

To gather the information to address these questions three research projects were conducted. The first project compared faculty attitudes toward grading five years ago with the attitudes of the present faculty. The second project compared current faculty attitudes toward grading with current student attitudes toward grading. The third project, in cooperation with the Academic Dean, involved a survey of the academic departments on grading practices.

In May 1972, under the combined auspices of the AAUP and the Self Study Committee, a four part questionnaire on grading was sent to 196 instructional faculty and department chairmen. The major categories of the questionnaire were General Theory of Grading, Catalog Definitions of Grades, Criteria for Determining Course Grades and Applications of Particular Course Grades. Ninety-six returns were received and their responses form the basis of comparison with the present faculty questionnaire.

The questionnaire which had been submitted to the instructional faculty and department chairmen in 1972 was revised for this study in cooperation with Committee A of the Faculty Council. New questions of

interest were added. These new questions focused on criterion referenced grading, honors, the time allocated for submitting grades, the influence of a student's attitude and behavior on his grade, and the components which determined a student's grade. The questions of the 1972 questionnaire formed the basis for the comparison of the faculty responses in 1972 and 1976. The new questionnaire with its additional questions formed the basis for the comparison of the faculty and student responses.

The third project grew out of the response of the Academic Dean to the Faculty Council resolution that he survey the departments' attitudes on grading. He submitted three questions on grading which were of concern to him. The questions addressed the issues of institutional policy on grading, the criterion for grading, and the type and frequency of evaluations. This project was complementary to the questionnaire and enhanced the completeness of the research.

Implications and Significance

The historical background and major issues of this study provide a perspective for understanding the impact of this study on Bridgewater State College. It is clear that the grading system of a college is a highly visible component of the academic endeavors within an institution. From the point of view of the faculty it is a time consuming process which is a demanding task master, possibly the least enjoyable of their responsibilities. If an institution has a grading system it has generally been arrived at through a consensus of the faculty with the approval of the administration. The present view of the Bridgewater grading system has been preceded by six years of discussion without any definitive action taken. However, the concern of the administration and faculty would seem

to be reflected in the remarks of Juola as he commented on the national scene:

> It is enlightening that colleges have become aware of the problem and are showing a willingness to confront the issues. Prior to 1974, grade inflation was but a trend which appeared to have no preconceived plan or rationale. Many colleges with high inflation rates were not even aware of the phenomenon. With awareness, information and concern we are now in the position to consider forces that are operative and to make considered decisions with regard to a problem many consider serious. (Juola, 1976, p.5)

It was the feeling of the faculty and administration that recommendations on the grading system be made during the 1976-77 academic year. It was the intent of this MARP to provide the necessary input from the faculty and students so that appropriate recommendations could be made. Chapter Two places the problem in the context of grading practices elsewhere in the higher educational community and provides insight into the underlying attitudes behind them. Current recommendations are presented with an eye toward implementation at Bridgewater State College. Chapter Three details the methodology and findings of this study. The discussion of the findings and their implications for Bridgewater State College is contained in Chapter Four. Appropriate recommendations for modification or reinforcement of the present grading system and requirements for honors are presented in the final chapter of the study. Using this information the academic leaders will formulate policy on grading and honors to improve educational practice at Bridgewater State College.

II

Review of the Literature

The subject of grading is a contentious one which has and will continue to provoke debate, passion, strong opinions, and to a lesser extent, some commonly agreed on solutions. In 1880, a Verginia institution had a six point grading scale - good, better, best, poor, poorer, poorest. Because the president thought too many mediocre students received the grade of "best" the scale was changed to a three point one - distinguished, approved and disapproved. Soon, however, the president was discontented again, for some bad scholars were approved and good students were all distinguished. (Cureton, 1971)

This present chapter presents a review of the literature on grading. It establishes a perspective on the problem by tracing the history of grading practices in the United States. Subsequently it deals with topics on grading which are relevant to Bridgewater State College: institutional philosophies, grading systems, criterion and norm referenced assessment, faculty and student attitudes, pass-fail, honors, grades and later success, and recommendations for improvement to the grading system.

History of Grading in the United States

To understand the present controversies on grading it is desirable to place the problem in its historical context. Smallwood (1935) traced the history of grading in American Universities from colonial times to 1900. She noted that grades originated in an attempt to express to those who had been examined the professor's idea of the result of the examinations. Initially classes had been arranged according to family position, an attempt at social ranking. The custom of having a valedictorian and a

salutatorian was seen as a public attempt to distinguish between degrees of intellectual ability. Yale began in 1732 to record students as first, second best, inferior and bad. In 1813, a 4 point scale was introduced at Yale, 1 to 20 at Harvard in 1830, 1 to 100 in 1864 at Michigan. Letter grades first appeared at Harvard in the 1880's when the faculty felt that using the minute details of a percentage system had been most unsatisfactory. Smallwood commented on these changes:

> The great variety of methods of evaluation from the seventeenth century until recent years indicates a growing dissatisfaction with the efficiency of these methods. The demands on evaluation became increasingly more insistent and difficult to satisfy. One method after another was tried, each change was motivated by some external social, political or economic variation in the world. The necessity of the movement saw the origin of new ways of examining and grading. (Smallwood, 135, p. 115)

Smith and Dobbin (1960) found several studies from the period 1910 to 1920 which disclosed the variability and unreliability of grades. Of particular interest are three frequently cited studies of Starch and Eliot from 1912 to 1913 which questioned the reliability of grades because of the variability of teacher values and expectations. Two significant advances with impact on grading occurred during this time, the sophistication of statistical tools for analyzing data and the development of objectives which gave improved means for measuring the outcomes of instruction. Such testing gained widespread publicity through the use in World War I of the Army Alpha and Beta tests. It was also during this period that grading on a curve was introduced. The 1920's saw the acceleration of the replacement of the percentage system with practice favoring the use of four to seven symbols.

During the 1930's the testing movement which had begun in World War I grew extensively. State and regional testing programs were developed

which stressed the acquisition of knowledge rather than its applications. The progressive movement which identified the growth of the total person, individual differences and individualized instruction became a goal for many, a reaction, perhaps, to the growth of standardized testing.

Smith and Dobbin believe the literature between 1940 and 1960 indicated a growing conviction that marking practices must be consistent with educational objectives. As a result there was less concern with the mechanical aspects of marking and more concern with the purposes of marking and their relation to learning. They characterized this as a concern for "increased comprehensiveness in areas of student development being marked, greater specificity in what is marked and broader involvement of all those concerned with the marks." (Smith, Dobbin, 1960, p. 784)

Thorndike (1969) reported that the most common system in effect in the 1960's was A, B, C, D and F with or without modifiers + and -. He concluded that much of the literature on marks and marking over the past 50 years had missed the mark. The research had failed to be sensitive to the limits on time, precision of judgement and skill in assessment wherein the typical teacher operates. Likewise there had been a lack of awareness of the complex cultural pressures bearing upon an instructor within the society of an educational institution. These cultural pressures define the basis and limits of faculty grading practices much more than any psychometric theory. Thorndike suggests that any reform or improvement of grading practices must address these factors.

Warren (1971) reported that of the approximately 200 articles, papers, and reports about grades appearing from 1965 to 1970, about one-fourth considered the form of grades, especially whether Pass-Fail should replace A through F. Another one-fourth considered the use of under-

graduate grades to predict grades in graduate or professional schools. The remaining half of the literature discussed a wide variety of topics: variability in student standards, disadvantages of grades, effects of grades on students, use of grades to predict occupational success, determinants of grades, and the social effects of grades. From these studies Warren concludes that only a few general statements could be made with much confidence:

> students approve of Pass-Fail grading but when offered a Pass-Fail option, they often didn't take the option to take courses they otherwise would have taken; deans and others concerned with admission to graduate and professional school would disapprove of Pass-Fail grading in undergraduate colleges; undergraduate grades predict first-year graduate and professional schools about as well as they have for years, but not very well most of the time, occasionally well, occasionally not at all. (Warren, 1971, p. 2)

Institutional Philosophy

Any analysis of the grading practices of an institution must be related to the educational philosophies of the administration, faculty and to some extent, the constituency supporting the institution. Dressel (1961) suggests three contrasting institutional patterns of thinking about evaluation: traditionalism, eclecticism and relativism. The traditionalist view of evaluation is highly subjective, with an emphasis on oral and written procedures which are likely to be cumulative and comprehensive in nature. One example of the traditionalist view would be found at St. John's of Annapolis. Evaluation for the eclectic tends to favor the mastery of a body of factual knowledge and to some extent the intellectual skills needed to deal with it. Cumulative, comprehensive evaluation is deemed of little worth, for courses and disciplines stand separately with no planned relationship. Credit and grades constitute the major evaluation of learning which takes place. Most colleges operate on this basis.

Finally, for the relativist, evaluation is not simply a basis for decision, but rather a significant and necessary educational experience which instills the habits, attitudes and skills necessary if students and faculty alike are to increase in their capacity for making their decisions. It is only in this view that evaluation becomes freely accepted as a vital phase of every aspect of the program. Antioch, Bennington and Black Mountain are cited as examples of this position.

Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) believe that administration and faculty have institutionalized grades as the only means by which performance is assessed. Since grades are available for all students they tend to be used as means of distinguishing among student for all sorts of other purposes, athletics, drama and the like. Euh (1976) suggests that if a grading system is to be meaningful some kind of agreement on grading standards should be reached. He feels that as long as faculties and administrations have institutionalized grades as the only formal means by which student performance is evaluated, and since grades can have a very powerful impact upon the student's career, the grading system should be saved by utilization of a commonly agreed upon standard among instructors. Dressel (1961) recognizes the existence in most institutions of differing and conflicting theories of education, most of which, including that of the institution as a whole, have not been crystallized into a basis for educational planning. However, he believes that the opinions, beliefs and attitudes mingled with some well-founded judgements give to each faculty member and in the composite, to the institution an image which approximates an educational philosophy.

Miller (1967) in a polemic on grading comments that it seems clear that the grading system, at all levels including the graduate one, tends

to reward the conforming plodder and to penalize the imaginative student who is likely to make a significant contribution to nearly any field. It is obvious that the discouragement and neglect that creative students tend to receive are only expressed in grades.

Bess (1975) suggests that existing and proposed grading systems should be evaluated within the framework of specific institutional objectives. It is only through such an evaluation that grading policies will be established and allow for attainment of the educational objectives of an institution. Scully (1975) indicates two institutions which have returned to more stringent grading practices: the University of Massachusetts which restored the computation of F into the grade point average, and secondly, Stanford which has restored the grade of D. At Stanford the prior removal of the grade of D made it appear that C was a less respectable grade and this prior step had spurred grade inflation. The Chronicle of Higher Education on January 26, 1976 reports Yale's reinstatement of recording failing grades on student transcripts. This action was motivated in part by the thought that the grading system had produced an absurd situation in which a failing grade became more desirable in the eyes of many than a D or even a C because it was not recorded.

Aleamini (1976) sees a solution to the grading problem only when an approach is made to seek common definitions of what grades mean. Feldmesser (1972) proposes that each college should publish a clear statement about grading practices and policies with faculty and students participating in drawing it up.

Trow (1973) sees variable standards in institutions of mass higher education which differ in severity and character in different parts of the

institution. These result in different criteria of achievement which are eventually reflected in grading practices. Goldman (1974) in a study at the University of California, Riverside, found the differences in grading practice among fields as large enough to confirm the student belief that grades in varying disciplines had different values. Goldman and Hewitt (1975) in a subsequent study at four other campuses of the University of California found that the value of grades did differ among major fields. Euh (1976) determined that at Western Michigan the natural scientists depended upon one absolute scale, a normal distribution curve and standards based upon their own experience with no student judgement; the humanists depended on their own experience, and the social scientists on their own experience and the student's judgement. He found that the natural scientists agreed with the position that a college or department must have a common agreement regarding academic standards while the members of the humanities faculty and social scientists were ambivalent on such a stand. Juola (1976) believes the basis for grades can be adapted to reflect the dominant institutional philosophy of different institutions or even units within an institution. However, any such system must be uniformly accepted and applied; individual deviations introduce ambiguities and undermine the system for all.

Grading System

Hiner (1973) compares what he regards as the basic types of grading systems: criterion referenced, norm referenced, effort grading, blanket grades and no grade. In a criterion referenced system, a student's grades are based on the way in which his achievement level relates to some absolute standards established by the professor. In a norm referenced system the student achievement is evaluated and rewarded in terms of its

relationship to the performance of other students, not according to some absolute standard. In an effort grading system a student's grade is not based on his performance or how it relates to the achievement of his peers, but rather on how hard he tried. In blanket grading an instructor gives each student who does the required amount of work the blanket grade. Kirschenbaum, Simon and Napier (1971) cite alternatives or modifications of the above mentioned grading systems as: written evaluations, self-grading, contract grading and pass-fail. Moulds (1974), a critic of present grading practices sees no resolution of the controversy over the value of alphabetical, pass-fail, portfolio or credits for learning systems. For him the discussion of the pros and cons for each method has resulted in confusion among the students and faculty.

AACRAO (1971) surveyed its members in their grading practices. Fifty-one percent of the institutions who responded indicated they used traditional grading systems, forty-six percent indicated they were using grading systems that combined traditional and non-traditional practices, and two percent indicated they were using non-traditional systems exclusively. Additionally, sixty-one percent indicated they used pass-fail or credit non-credit, forty-one percent predicted their grading system would become less traditional.

Criterion and Norm Referenced Assessment

Anderson (1975) states that criterion referenced has become a catchall not only for measures appropriately described by that term but also for measures more precisely defined as content referenced or as construct referenced. Such assessment is frequently view in sharp contradistinction to norm referenced measurement and sometimes with the connotation of "good" versus "bad" measurement practice. The author

believes the two measurement approaches frequently overlap and may be useful supplements to each other since normative considerations often underlie the choice of instrument and performance standards for criterion referenced tests.

Dressel (1976) sees three issues which limit criterion referenced assessment. First, if grades are awarded on basis of previously specified levels of performance, the student can determine the grade by the effort he makes. However, the differences in student interest and preparation combined with calendar limitations render it unlikely that all students will attain A or B level. Secondly, repeated testing to demonstrate mastery poses difficulties in test development even when instructors are willing to undertake the task of developing equivalencies in test forms and tasks. A responsibility which he feels many teachers would be unwilling to undertake. Thirdly, facility in learning may become more important than learning itself. Positively, Dressel suggests that attempts to move toward criterion referenced grading may have tremendously beneficial effects on teaching and learning by forcing professors to be much more clear and specific about expected outcomes than they are now. This is a theme which runs through much of the literature on this subject.

Mayville (1975) shares Dressel's concern about effort, that the question of evaluation will take on another dimension. In this context he sees learning as instilling a desire to learn by use of a "mastery" concept. Thus the future use of the earned credit seems of less inherent interest than the desire of the student to learn. Milton and Edgerly (1976) in a study on grading sponsored by Change see criterion referenced grading as an emerging model in competency based curricula, especially in professional curricula. Keller, a leading proponent of this type of

grading has written: "I can see the day when the length of any course of study will depend entirely upon its content and the student who undertakes it, when letter or number grades have disappeared or have been vested with new meaning, when no student is advanced in status unless he deserves it." (Keller, 1974, p. 115) Collins and Nickel (1974) believe that as competency-based education becomes more wide-spread changes in grading will come into being which will alter the traditional transcript GPA approach.

Williams, Pollack, Ferguson (1975) found results in their research that suggest student knowledge of performance early in the term in conjunction with the grading system influences performance on later tests. Initial performance of students under a norm referenced system had a more direct relationship with later performance than was the case of students under a criterion referenced system. Warren (1975) adds a cautious note. He stresses that until better information is available on the effectiveness of grades with respect to the varied functions they are used for, the continued trading of unsupported assertions about them will be fruitless. New approaches to grading, such as contract and criterion referenced grading do not change the basic issues. McKeachie (1976) questions the mastery concept and its essential emphasis on reaching a particular finish line. He sees most educational purposes of higher education as having no end point but rather being extensive in breadth and depth of possibilities. Thus the more limited it is that the student should "master" the less valid is the grade in terms of its ability to assess the students with respect to other problems.

Faculty and Student Attitudes

Faculty

Dressel (1961) view the grading practices of the individual teachers

as a concern to the entire faculty. Snap courses, in which high grades are generously given with a minimum of student effort, permit continuance of the inept and reflect discredit on the college. The occasional professor who refuses to give a "normal proportion" of high grades discourages students from taking his courses. Such a situation reminds him of Traver and Gronlund's study (1950) that the same grade given by different teachers by no means reflects the same standard of achievement. Hollenberg (1973) does not see that injustices outside of education can be addressed by artifically inflating grades. He is convinced that the majority of teachers accept the compromise involved and assign grades on their best estimates of achievement.

Eble (1972) in his report on the "Project to Improve College Teaching" which was sponsored by the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges argues for an abandonment of the punitive aspects of grading. He cites the need to remove competitiveness as reflected in grading and a need for the faculty to see the students' romantic view of the ease of learning and of the beneficial effects of eliminating competition for the truth there is in it. Collins and Nickel (1974) in a study of five hundred and forty-four institutions of higher education gained the impression from their data that there is a trend toward being less punitive with grades. This practice would seem to be reflected philosophically by Leary:

> Education must begin to provide students with a variety of opportunities to help them realize the impact of being held responsible for their actions. When evaluation becomes an actual part of life's fulfillment, satisfaction and enchantment, it will emerge without controversy. (Leary, 1975, p.25)

White (1975) sees grading as a sorting of abilities which faculty would prefer not to do. However, the college faculties remain the best

means for sorting and selecting that is existent and offer the best resource for doing this sorting though the inadequacies of the present system demand a more viable one. A Temple University report (1968) found that grades in the same course differed dramatically between teachers in the same course in the same department. Doerann-George, Judith and Others (1974) found that 84 percent of the students in their survey felt instructors of different levels of the same course are likely to give different grades. The faculty in this same study were undecided as to whether their grades accurately reflected different levels of student achievement. However, they generally felt that they had accumulated enough evidence to give a valid grade and that the students understood the basis for grading.

Chansky (1964) reviewing the research on grading found evidence of capricious judgements and volatile criteria as well as differing faculty attitudes on the meaning of grades. Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) saw an outcome of their study that from the faculty point of view grading should be abolished rather than attempt to patch up old and unworkable systems. They do not see this move as involving any violation of democratic principles or procedures and believe it would create much less antagonism among students. Dressel (1976) suggests that psychologists such as Carl Rogers, Earl Kelley, Abraham Maslow, Arthur Combs and Phillip Clark embrace a self-actualization view of motivation which sees the traditional approach to grading as autocratic and capricious. They believe faculty should adapt themselves to allow for individual differences and mastery rather than using norm referenced assessment. Dressel questions whether an approach which relies on intrinsic motivation is possible in light of the flow of new knowledge and technology. He doubts that society would support colleges that adopt such a course.

Arthur (1975) sees the change in teaching method from authoritarian to more democratic styles as contributing to grade inflation. Juola (1976) believes that the forces leading to grade inflation are evasive and difficult to verify but that the faculty concern for individual rights is a contributing factor. Davidson (1975) reacts to the inflationary trend by questioning the marketability of high grades and the academic reputation of the institutions awarding them. He sees a variety of reasons as contributing to the trend and the need for the faculty to evaluate the meaning and use of grades. Scott (1975) believes current discussions over higher grades warrants a clear analysis of the factors responsible lest a hasty implication be arrived at that the faculty has lost control or that students have slipped. His study suggests increased use of the grade of incomplete, independent study courses, modular or self-paced courses, substitution of research papers for examinations and a greater interest by faculty in the effort by students are factors contributing to the rise. O'Neil (1975) cites three scholars, Toronto's Allen Bloom, Columbia's Charles Frankel and Yale's C Van Woodward, who saw grade inflation as a trend which was eroding academic values. But he cautions that it would be possible to pursuade conscientious critics that higher grades, lower standards, student apathy and faculty malaise cannot all fairly be attributed to curricular innovation. Suslow (1977) concludes that the recent era of innovations in grading systems appears to have run its course. He senses that a sudden reversal of current grading standards is not necessarily desirable and certainly would not be acceptable to most students and faculty. If, however, the present concern about grade inflation is sustained he sees more colleges exploring ways of modifying their grading systems. Martin (1974) raises the ethical question whether the

pressures to maintain or expand enrollments, to help students and to fill empty spaces, may have caused some colleges to relax academic standards.

Students

Chansky (1962) found that many educators saw grades as motivating students positively while considerable research suggested that poor students continued to fail. Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) believe that students do what they calculate will best enable them to make the grade in which the institution proffers as the only impersonal, objective way of making the assessment. Students may underachieve academically so that they may gain benefits in other areas of campus life. They concluded from student point of view there should be a differentiated system of academic requirements. Katz and Associates' (1968) sample showed that half of the men and forty percent of the women replied that the emphasis on grades had stimulated them to greater achievement while half felt the grading system had inhibited them. They concluded that for many students, studying is desirable not so much for the sake of intellectual growth, as for the sake of self esteem through more successful performance as measured by grades. Thayer (1971) found that to a certain extent there is support for grading systems that minimize low grades and maximize high grades if students are to be encouraged not to give up. Warren (1971) discovered in his overview of grading that students had varying attitudes toward grades. Some students valued the formal recognition of accomplishment that grades represented and worked to get it. For others the almost continuous self-assessment derived from cues provided by teachers was sufficient.

Lipset and Schaflander (1971) discussed the student movements of the sixties. In their estimation radicals see in the power to grade an instrument of coercion which prevents the free interchange of ideas and

opinions between faculty and students. The fact that a meritocratic grading system has been seen as an instrument of freedom by those from underprivileged backgrounds is foreign to them. Taylor (1975) reacted strongly to the radical view. For her it was both anti-intellectual and irresponsible to suggest that responsibility for the student's success or failure lay with something or somebody other than the student. Doerann-George, Judith and others (1974) found in their survey that twenty-six percent of the students strongly disagreed and thirty-nine percent disagreed with the notion that their grades accurately represented their achievement. McKenzie (1975) concluded that given the quality of the professor, economic theory suggests that student ratings can be distorted by the instructor's grading structures. If two professors were equal in every respect he would predict that the professor with the highest grading structure will tend to receive the highest student ratings. Astin (1976) in a survey of freshman attitudes for the American Council on Education found that twenty-one percent of the students felt that college grades should be abolished though it should be noted that in 1970 this percentage was forty-four. Eleven percent estimated they would graduate with honors and forty-one percent estimated they would make at least a "B" average. Sgndy (1976) found results which indicated the lower the expected grade or the higher the obtained grade the more favorable was the teacher's evaluation. Students attributed A's to themselves and C's to the faculty.

Pass-Fail

Sgan (1970) in his study at Brandeis found that first year students ran into trouble with pass-fail. Whatever the reason for this he felt that there would seem to be some need for special preparation and attention to first year students if pass-fail is opened to them. Quann (1971)

conducted an extensive analysis of pass-fail which was presented in a paper to the Association of Registrars and Directors of Admissions. He found the use of this option in the first two years to be moderate. Students were favorable to the option and did use it to reduce anxiety. However, they tended to get lower grades in the courses in which they did. Highest student use of the option for students in a 1 to 4 scale was neither with the highest or lowest average students but rather with those students whose average fell between 2.5 to 2.9. Delohery and McLaughlin (1971) cited surveys at Princeton and Southern Illinois which indicated that students had suffered some loss of motivation in their pass-fail courses.

Claunch (1972) developed a probabilistic model which showed the inflationary influence that pass-fail courses can have on a student's quality point average. He believes that even when the reasons for adopting this option are persuasive, many persons will be interested in learning the probable effects of the proposal in the number of students redistributed to higher academic categories and the probable number of openings for new students. Feldmesser (1972) cites Sgan and others as supportive of the notion that when pass-fail courses are offered faculty tend to become somewhat lax about evaluations. Bailey (1972) edited an AACRAO report which surveyed colleges and students on pass-fail and Government, Industry and Graduate Institutions on its acceptability. The findings indicated that most colleges limited the amount of pass-fail courses a student might take, students were generally enthusiastic about the option, and graduate schools more than government and industry were least receptive to its use.

Davidovicz (1972) surveyed a sample of the literature on pass-fail grading between 1968 and 1971. He found evidence that freshmen suffered

most from taking pass-fail while students generally did not strengthen themselves academically by pursuing this option. Most colleges did not have substantial problems with this option because they limited its use. Finally, it appeared that the exercise of the option by students limited their opportunities to transfer or to gain admission to the graduate school of their choice. Harrington (1974) surveyed both faculty and students at the University of California, Berkeley. Eighty percent of the faculty who responded were at least modestly pleased with the system. A large majority of them felt the pass-fail option did offer the students opportunities to take courses which were challenging and unfamiliar without fear of a poor grade. The faculty, however, did not favor extending the option. A majority of the students who were surveyed did not consider grades in themselves to be effective as motivators nor fair or accurate. More than seventy percent of the students favored continuing such a system to two-thirds of their courses. At Carnegie-Mellon, Hanusa and Korn (1975) found a preference for pass-fail grading to be negatively related to student's perceptions of grades as useful to their motivation to succeed through high grades.

Oberlin (1975) questioned 130 graduate schools of education on the acceptability of pass-fail. Two-thirds indicated they would accept a student with pass-fail courses providing other standard requirements were met or with extra emphasis given to standardized test scores for admission. Dressel (1976) sees the positive effects of pass-fail as enabling the students to pursue their own bents rather than slavishly conforming to instructors requirements or prejudices, encouraging them to enroll in courses without fear of low grades resulting from competition with majors and reducing anxiety over grades while freeing the individual to pursue

knowledge for its own sake. Negatively, Dressel reviewed many studies which demonstrated that in a pass-fail system students are less motivated, do less work and earn lower grades than do students subject to the full range of grading. As cited in other authors Dressel found major opposition to pass-fail among deans and admissions officers of professional and graduate schools. Finally his own evaluation was that this option may encourage rather than discourage poor teaching, inadequate curriculum planning and student aversion to scholarly effort.

Honors

Dressel (1961) found that in some colleges the award of honors is based on high performance in the senior comprehensive exam required of all students, whereas in others comprehensive examinations are required only of candidates for honors. Bolin (1975) has reported in several places the implication of recent inflation in honors. His study was of 4 northeastern universities in 1964, 1969, and 1974. The weighted percentage of degrees conferred with honors had increased from 14% to 42% during the decade. The escalation could not be explained by comparing Scholastic Apptitude Test scores or academic requirements for earning honors. He found a strong relationship between SAT's and honors between 1964 and 1969 but not after 1969. Plausible explanations for the rise were: changes in grading patterns and practices, relaxation of academic standards, and perhaps changes in faculty expectations. Bolin believes the relaxation of standards of attaining honors raises serious questions concerning the true meaning of outstanding academic achievement and forces institutions to end the pretense of awarding honors or to reserve them for only their top students.

Scully (1976) reports that Phi Beta Kappa chapters have tightened

requirements for election so that grade inflation would not bring a glut of new members. The by-laws of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa limits those who may be elected. The members elected may not ordinarily exceed ten percent and in no case exceed fifteen percent of those expected to receive liberal bachelor degrees in their class. Research has shown, however, that a number of chapters have raised their requirements to include only the top three percent of those working toward degrees in the two classes. The Chronicle of Higher Education reported on January 31, 1977 that St. John's of Annapolis and Santa Fe had dropped honor's degrees. The students grades would be kept on record and revealed only if the student so requests. The college has not found that granting of honors degrees could be carried out with sufficiently strict and clear justice. Dean Wilson said "Whatever function that the Honors' degree may have had, it can be better fulfilled by letters of recommendation which can be more specific and less subject to interpretation." (The Chronicle of Higher Education, January 31, 1977, p. 2)

Grades and Success

Hoyt (1965) found that college grades do not appear to be related to significant adult achievement. Jencks and Riesman (1969) suggest a review of the literature on the relationship between the grades a student receives in course grades and occupational success is in fact very low, often approaching zero. "Indeed, the low correlation between grades and later success may show only that professors cannot measure their own success in teaching whatever they seek to teach, rather than showing that what they teach is irrelevant to job performance." (Jencks and Riesman, 1969, p. 206) Moulds (1975) sees no relationship existing between grades and postgraduate success. Students give many reasons for attending

colleges and success may be evaluated in terms of fulfillment of their grades. Satisfaction of curiosity in specific fields, however, does not guarantee future success. Munday and Davis (1974) in a study on accomplishment after college found that college grades are not related to the kind of adult accomplishment studied. Their findings were consistent with Hoyt's that college grades are uncorrelated with many indices of success after college. Grose (1975) indicates that while high school grades do seem to be the best predictors of college achievement, the relationship between grades and later success in the adult world is not strong. In light of this Grose questions whether grades measure what they are meant to measure.

Recommendations

Thorndike (1969) suggests that one who would reform the marking system of an educational institution need first to acquire a professional understanding of the culture of the institution. Earlier Wrinkle (1950) had made a similar suggestion. He concluded that the first step in any improvement of marking was the identification of objectives in terms of student behavior and stressed the periodic review of any marking system by the students it affects. Warren (1971) questioned whether it is known what grades represent as indexes of academic performance. He sees a need to better describe the components and structure of grades before the substantial issues can be faced. Chansky (1973) suggest that when the student's main motive is to take a course or to develop social competency it would be appropriate to grade pass-fail. When the main motive is to demonstrate excellence as it would be early in training better students must be distinguished from average or poor ones. Thus it would be appropriate to grade A, B, C, D, F, and standards do exist for making

these judgements. If, however, the main motive is student growth credit should be given without a grade.

Lippincott (1973) argues for maintaining traditional academic standards and a realistic grading system. He sees no alternative offering with any real promise that has been advanced. Students can gain a sense of fulfillment through recognition of their competence and of their contribution. Further, since the world has need for rare talents and abilities the academic proving ground provides both an index to their presence and a medium for their development. Mayville (1975) sees a definite need for a systematic examination of the grading question from which clear guidelines can be drawn. Until this is accomplished the diverse student populations who are in the process of being educated are in danger of being poorly served in their desire for a higher education. Bolin (1975) believes each college must decide whether it will end the practice of awarding honors and move into a full-fledged pass-fail or pass-no credit grading system or whether it will return to a realistic evaluation of academic achievement. In the latter process faculty members will be challenged to develop course objectives and evaluative criteria and will strive to give an honest appraisal of performance and academic attainment.

Cahn and Kitcher (1976) propose that grades be reported by including the number of students enrolled in that course and the percentage of students who received an equal or higher grades. In this way no one, including the student, would be mislead as inflation in a particular course would be obvious. Aleamini (1976) rejects this solution as simply another way to indicate where a person falls on a grading curve and suggests that the proper approach would be to seek common definitions of what grades mean. Bailey (1977) reports five colleges are considering the

adoption of a modification of this solution. This academic reporting system is called the Relative Transcript. Each student's grade report and permanent record will include not only his or her grade in each course but also the number of students enrolled and the average grade given in that course.

Euh (1976) suggests that if the grading system is to be meaningful some kind of agreement on grading standards must be reached. As long as faculties and administrations have institutionalized grades as the only formal means by which students performance is evaluated, the grading system should be saved by utilization of a commonly agreed upon standard among instructors. Juola (1976) sees a diversity of instructional approaches which are making new demands on a single grading system. He believes the basis for grades can be adapted to reflect the dominant institutional philosophy of different institutions or even units within an institution. This, however, must be a considered decision which must then be defined and communicated to those who use and benefit from the symbols. The development of grading systems which reflect alternative instructional philosophies may alienate the problem of grade assignment, but even with a more compatible system, grades must be controlled and given seriously and thoughtfully.

Summary of the Literature

In considering the factors cited in the Review of the Literature there is evidence that similar factors are present at Bridgewater State College. The number of students pursuing independent studies has increased. As a result of the trustee policy that higher educational opportunities be extended to the greatest possible number of students of all ages the student body is becoming more diverse, a reflection of a wider socio-

economic base. There has been the acknowledgement that, particularly, in the Professional Education areas the market for teachers is so poor that grades other than A will preclude the students from obtaining positions.

The statistics which can be seen in Tables two and three in Chapter I serve as an excellent comparison with the study of Bolin. They show that at Bridgewater there has been an increase in honors graduates without any corresponding increase in Scholastic Apptitude Test scores on the part of the students. It might also be noted that there has been no change in academic requirements for earning honors which might explain the rise.

Bridgewater does reflect the national phenonmenon that grade inflation has apparently leveled off. Additionally, the attitudes of the faculty and students would appear to be similar to those reflected elsewhere. What is necessary, as is suggested in the literature, is that there be a clear understanding of the basis for grading before there can be any improvement of the grading system. The research of this study is intended to provide the framework which recommendations can be made for modification of the present marking system of the college.

III

The Research

A heightened awareness of grade inflation has been a national experience in higher education. A variety of reasons have been cited as contributing to the rise in grades: the extension of admissions to more diverse groups, changes in teaching styles, non-punitive grading practices and increased use of mastery models. While grade inflation appears to be leveling off the discussion generated by it continues. Not surprisingly, it often seems that for each campus there is a diversity of attitudes and recommendations. This present study was intended to gather information to contribute to a solution of the grading problems of Bridgewater State College. Three research projects were conducted for this study and are reported in this chapter.

The first project was a comparison of faculty perceptions of grading in 1972 and 1976. In 1972 the AAUP and the Self Study Committee had formulated a grading questionnaire which was distributed to the faculty. That questionnaire was revised for this study in cooperation with Committee "A" of the Faculty Council. The comparison of the faculty responses to the identical questions in the 1972 and 1976 questionnaires comprise the first of three sets of findings of this study. The second project was a comparison of faculty and student perceptions on grading by means of the revised 1976 questionnaire. As mentioned above the 1972 grading questionnaire was used in formulating the 1976 questionnaire and was the basis for the comparison of faculty attitudes in this study. A further adaptation was made for use by the current students. The results of the comparison of the current faculty and student responses comprise

the second set of findings of this study. The third project was a survey of the academic departments on three questions of grading which were a concern to the Academic Dean. The results of this survey comprise the third set of findings in this study. This chapter will proceed by describing, in turn, the procedures of each project and the results which it produced.

A Comparison of Faculty Perceptions in 1972 and 1976

As noted above the 1972 questionnaire was revised for use by the faculty for the 1976 questionnaire. The revision added specific questions of interest to Committee "A" of the Faculty Council. These new questions focused on criterion referenced grading, honors, the time allocated for submitting grades, the influence of a student's attitude and behavior on his grade, and the components which determine a student's grade.

The 1976 questionnaire focused on the major issues of this MARP. Part I, General Theory of Grading, addressed the issues of the modification of the current grading system, the effect of extrinsic conditions on grading, honors, and the extension of pass-fail. Part II, Catalog Definitions of Grades, addressed the issues of acceptability, applicability and practice of the institutional definitions of the letter grades. Part III addressed the issue of criteria for determining course grades. So that a correlation might be made with the 1972 study the respondents were asked to reply on a scale of three.

The faculty questionnaire was distributed to all members of the instructional faculty and department chairmen. One hundred and nineteen returns were received out of a possible 201 for the faculty questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire were scored in the same manner as for the study of 1972. Each answer in Part I, General Theory, was recorded and

counted as given. The "no opinion" votes were not regarded as a vote to disagree or agree. In the other three parts of the questionnaire each check mark was counted and no weights assigned. When the results of the questionnaires were tabulated a Chi-square test was used to compare the distribution of the responses of the faculty on the 1972 and the 1976 questionnaires at the .05 level of significance. A standard program, Kronos Library Program Stat 05, was run on the college computer to obtain the Chi-square results. (Control Data Corporation, Publication No. 86605900, pp. 1-6-1, 2) In Part III and Part IV the faculty and student results for the category, "other" were small. Since some of the responses for "other" had an expected frequency of less than 1 the results were not included in the Chi-square tests. This provided consistency in the Chi-square tests and avoided any capricious combining of the category "other" with the specified categories. For the critical values of Chi-square, Mendenhall and Ott, 1972, pp. 274-5, was used.

The Findings

In seeking to report the results of the questionnaires Tables have been prepared which are accompanied by additional textual materials which summarize the data of the study. Each section is concluded with the determination of whether a significant difference existed in the responses of the faculty in 1972 and 1976 questionnaires at the .05 level of significance. The raw data upon which the Chi-square tables were based can be found in Appendix D. For the sake of ease in understanding the data for Part I, General Theory of Grading, the tables were prepared on the basis of majority agreement or disagreement with the questions. It was possible to do this because the faculty responses in 1972 and in 1976 showed the same pattern of agreement and disagreement with the questions of Part I.

Table 5. Percentage of Faculty Agreement with Selected Items of General Theory, 1972 and 1976, Listed in Rank Order.

Items	1972	1976
grades a significant part of teacher's responsibility	88.5	89.9
grades motivate students to work harder	84.3	86.5
grades provide useful information to outside world	79.1	75.4
grading practices consistent with department	63.6	68.4

Table 5 presents some basic insights into the attitudes of the Bridgewater faculty. There is, first of all, the strong acceptance of grading as a significant part of the teacher's responsibility. Secondly, almost equally as strong, there is the belief that grades do motivate students to work harder. Thirdly, though a contested issue in other colleges, three quarters of the Bridgewater faculty accept the concept that grades provide useful information to the outside world. Rather interesting, in terms of this study, it should be observed that 31.6% of the current faculty did not feel their grading practices were consistent with that of their departments. The Table further reveals no rank order changes in the faculty responses from 1972 to 1976.

Table 6. Percentage of Faculty Disagreement with Selected Items of General Theory, 1972 and 1976, Listed in Rank Order.

Items	1972	1976
grading practices consistent with college	69.6	64
expansion of pass-fail	48.7	56.2
attendance influences a student's grade	46.7	49.5

The faculty's strongest area of disagreement on both questionnaires for General Theory of Grading was that their grading practices were consistent with the college as a whole. Almost two-thirds of the faculty

felt their grading practices differed from that of the college as a whole, a finding with rather obvious overtones for this study and the Faculty Council debate. Similarly, there is the continual rejection of the expansion of pass-fail by the faculty despite the various proposals which have been recommended by faculty committees.

Table 7. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether There Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level Between the Responses of the Faculty to Selected Items of General Theory, 1972 and 1976.

Items	Chi-Square =	Degrees of Freedom
Grades a significant part	1.6602	2
Grades motivate students	.2314	2
Grades provide useful information	.5442	2
Grading practices with department	.8083	2
Grading practices with college	2.5587	2
Expansion of pass-fail	2.6511	2
Attendance influences grades	.3525	2

Significant difference at .05 level of significance for 2 Degrees of Freedom 5.9914.

It is clear from Table 7 that there was no significant difference at the .05 level between the responses of the faculty on the 1972 and 1976 questionnaires for the General Theory of Grading section. Since the Faculty Council discussions on grading have not generated any recommendations or modifications to the grading system during this same period this finding is not a surprising one.

Table 8. Percentage of Faculty Agreement with Current Catalog Definitions of Grades, Bridgewater State College, 1972 and 1976.

Catalog Definition	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
A - Superior	92.3	96
B - Good	85.8	91.4
C - Satisfactory	86.6	93.2
D - Poor	88.8	91.2
E - Failure	93.3	91.8

The faculty in both 1972 and 1976 were very supportive of the catalog definitions of the letter grades. If there is to be a strengthening of the grading system there must be a common point of departure. The faculty's acceptance of the catalog definitions is encouraging on this point.

Table 9. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether there Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level Between the Responses of the Faculty, 1972 and 1976, to the Bridgewater State College Catalog Definitions of Grades.

Catalog Definitions	Chi-Square =	Degree of Freedom
A - Superior	1.2344	1
B - Good	1.5274	1
C - Satisfactory	2.3807	1
D - Poor	.3048	1
E - Failure	.1524	1

Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 1 Degree of Freedom 3.8414.

There were no significant differences between the responses of the faculty on the 1972 and 1976 questionnaires for Part Two, Catalog Definitions of Grades. These statistics would seem to confirm the constancy of

the faculty positions.

Table 10. Percentage Distribution of Criteria for Determining Course Grades for Lower Division Courses by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Criteria	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Performance in terms of an absolute standard	23.1	26.3
Performance in terms of a Bridgewater standard	22.2	25.7
Performance in terms of other students	21.0	15.4
Demonstration of effort	21.3	20.4
Completion of certain amounts of work	10.6	11.2
Other	1.5	.84

The response of the faculty for lower division courses was more favorable to criteria which stressed standards rather than specified amounts of work or the relationship of the students' performance to one another. "Standards" was an oft repeated word in the faculty discussions. Additionally, their responses reflected an acknowledgement that, for the lower division courses, effort was a factor to be taken into consideration in arriving at a grade.

Table 11. Percentage Distribution of Criteria for Determining Course Grades for Upper Division Courses by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Criteria	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Performance in terms of an absolute standard	31.7	31.7
Performance in terms of a Bridgewater standard	20.8	22.2
Performance in terms of other students	16.4	19.0
Demonstration of effort	17.8	15.3

Table 11. (cont.)

Criteria	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Completion of certain amounts of work	12.4	10.1
Other	.7	1.4

The faculty, by an identical percentage in both studies, most strongly supported student performance to be judged in "terms of an absolute standard", a choice which also received their strongest support for lower division courses. Their acceptance of effort as a factor was considerably less than it was in the case of lower division courses.

Table 12. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether there Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level Between the Responses of the Faculty, 1972 and 1976, for Criteria for Determining Course Grades for Lower and Upper Division Courses.

Criteria	Chi-Square =	Degrees of Freedom
Lower Division Criteria	4.6609	4
Upper Division Criteria	2.0742	4

Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 4 Degrees of Freedom 9.4877

There was no significant difference at the .05 level of significance on the faculty choice for determining lower or upper division course grades. This lack of change is interesting in view of the general awareness of increased programmed instruction and competency based requirements.

Table 13. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: A, by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Description of Grade: A	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
A very special grade	30.4	30.1
Grade achieved by anyone willing to work for it	8.6	9.8

Table 13. (cont.)

Description of Grade: A	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Work far superior to that of most Bridgewater students	15.5	15.8
Work greatly superior to class average	24.7	23.4
Student has worked to fullest of his capacity	2.5	2.4
A numerical average in the 90's	14.9	16.7
Other	2.6	1.4

The faculty in 1972 and 1976 were strongest in their support of the description of "A" as "a very special grade" and as "indicating work superior to the class average". Though there was a six point gap between them these choices comprised 53 percent of the choices in a field of seven. Very little support was generated for the positions which recognized effort or the complete use of whatever capacity the student might have.

Table 14. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: B, by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Description of Grade: B	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Grade indicating commendable work	34.9	32.6
Grade given to most who complete assigned work	2.7	3.5
Work superior to that of most Bridgewater students	12.9	14.7
Work above the class average	24.1	23.5
Worked hard and demonstrated improvement	6.9	5.7
A numerical average in the 80's	16.4	17.8
Other	1.7	1.9

As in 1972 the faculty more strongly supported the description, "grade indicating commendable work" for the letter grade, "B". There was very limited support for effort as a factor or the acceptance of the concept that most who complete the assigned work would receive a "B".

Table 15. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: C, by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Description of Grade: C	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
A respectable grade for satisfactory work	32.5	34.5
A less than respectable grade	5.1	2.8
Average work for a Bridgewater student	18.8	18.9
Work at the level of the class average	19.2	19.8
Little visible effort and improvement	5.5	1.9
A numerical average in the 70's	17.0	16.7
Other	1.4	5.0

"C" as "a respectable grade" was the strongest description for the faculty in both 1972 and 1976. Of all the faculty choices for letter grade descriptions this choice was the clearest with almost a fifteen point gap between it and the next choice. "Effort" as an application for this letter grade was ranked last.

Table 16. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: D, by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Description of Grade: D	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Not qualified to do more advanced work	18.5	19.3
A very poor grade	17.0	14.6
Work inferior to that of most Bridgewater students	15.0	15.6
Work below the class average	18.5	22.6

Table 16. (cont.)

Description of Grade: D	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Unsatisfactory work, student has made some effort	8.8	9.4
Unsatisfactory work, student would not benefit from repeating the course	7.6	6.1
A numerical average in the 60's	12.2	11.3
Other	1.9	.7

"D" as "work below the class average" was the description chosen more frequently in both surveys. Their secondary support for the notion "not qualified to do more advance work" and in a lesser way for "unsatisfactory work, student would not benefit from repeating course" would seem to indicate some question in their minds as to the ability of some of their students to do college work.

Table 17. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: E, by Faculty, 1972 and 1976.

Description of Grade: E	Faculty 1972	Faculty 1976
Students who do not complete assigned work	29.5	29.3
Failure to achieve a minimal level of competence, even though the student worked hard	33.7	33.4
A numerical average below 60	16.1	18.1
For academic dishonesty	18.3	17.3
Other	2.2	1.7

The faculty response to the letter grade "E" was their only strongly supported response in Part IV which recognized effort on the part of the student as a contributing factor. In this instance, however, its recognition is limited as it is connected to the inability of the student

to achieve a minimal level of competence. It would not seem to alter the faculty's general view as expressed in their responses to all of Part IV that effort does not play an appreciable role in their judgements.

Table 18. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether there Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level for the Responses of the Faculty, 1972 and 1976, for Application of Course Grades.

Grade	Chi-Square =	Degrees of Freedom
A	.9952	5
B	1.5402	5
C	7.6949	5
D	3.2947	6
E	.4705	3

Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 3 Degrees of Freedom 7.8147, 5 Degrees of Freedom 11.0705, 6 Degrees of Freedom 12.5916.

There was no significant difference in the responses of the faculty in 1972 and 1976 for Part IV. As may be noted from the Chi-Square tables of this chapter the faculty were very consistent in their responses for 1972 and 1976.

A Comparison of Current Faculty and Student Perceptions

The faculty questionnaire of this study was adapted for use by the students. It was pretested on two occasions, the first time to a group of 27 students from all four classes, the second time to a group of 33 students from all four classes. The modifications effected between the first and second administrations strengthened and clarified the questionnaire for student use.

It should be noted that the wording of the student questionnaire differed from that of the faculty questionnaire in Part II. The faculty

were questioned as to whether they agreed with the catalog definitions of grades whereas the students were questioned whether the definitions were being followed by the faculty in practice. In the other three parts of the questionnaire the wording was such that the students were replying to the same questions as the faculty except for the question on honors. For that question the students answered an objective type question while the faculty were asked to respond in writing.

The student questionnaire was distributed to a random sample so that 100 from each of the four classes were reached. The results of the questionnaire were scored in the same manner as for the faculty. Each answer in Part I, General Theory, was recorded and counted as given. The "no opinion" votes were not regarded as a vote to disagree or agree. In the other three parts of the questionnaire each check mark was counted and no weights were assigned. When the results of the questionnaires were tabulated a Chi-square test was used to compare the distribution of the responses of the faculty and students for the 1976 questionnaires at the .05 level of significance. A standard program, Kronos Library Program Stat 05, was run on the college computer to obtain the Chi-square results. (Control Data Corporation, Publication No. 86605900, pp. 1-6-1, 2) In Part III and Part IV the faculty results for the category, "other", were small. Since some of the responses for "other" had an expected frequency of less than 1 the results were not included in the Chi-square tests. This provided consistency in the Chi-square tests and avoided any capricious combining of the category "other" with the specified categories. For the critical values of Chi-square, Mendenhall and Ott, 1972, pp. 274-5, were used.

The Findings

Table 19. Percentage Distribution of Agreement with Selected Items of General Theory, Students and Faculty, 1976.

Items	Students	Faculty
Grading is a significant part of the teacher's responsibility	74.7	89.9
Grades provide useful information to the outside world	34.5	75.4
Grades motivate students	76.5	86.5
Expansion of pass-fail	47.9	39.2
Students' attitude and behavior influence grade in:		
A. Classroom	73.9	32.7
B. Student Teaching	92.6	82.1
C. Field Experience	89.0	69.6
Attendance influences a grade	41.2	40.9
Class size affects grading	89.0	61.0
Grades influenced by discussion on grading	42.2	22.8
Time allocated affected grading	67.7	23.5

The faculty and students supported grading as a significant responsibility of the faculty. Although contested in other colleges, the students and faculty accepted the notion that grades motivate students. They also agreed that class size affects grading but that attendance should not influence the student's grade. In related questions they supported the student's attitude and behavior as influencing their grade in field experience and student teaching. Unlike the faculty, the students thought that their attitudes and behavior in the classroom should be a factor in their grades, that the grading discussion had influenced the faculty

grading practices and the time allocated for submitting grades did influence the grades submitted. By a surprisingly narrow margin of three points the students supported the expansion of pass-fail while the faculty did not. It might be noted that the students support did not achieve 50 percent. Finally, contrary to the faculty view, the students did not see grades as providing useful information to the outside world.

Table 20. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether there Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level Between the Responses of the Students and Faculty, 1970, to Selected Items of General Theory.

Items	Chi-Square =	Degrees of Freedom
Grading is a significant part of the teacher's responsibility	12.8431*	2
Grades provide useful information to the outside world	81.0971*	2
Grades motivate students	11.4763*	2
Expansion of pass-fail	3.5353	2
Student attitude and behavior influence grade in:		
A. Classroom	64.6561*	2
B. Student Teaching	10.2574*	2
C. Field Experince	26.6105*	2
Attendance influences grade	1.3443	2
Class size affects grading	57.2444*	2
Grades influenced by discussion on grading	49.5148*	2
Time allocated affected grading	133.271*	2

*Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 2 Degrees of Freedom 5.9914

Significant differences occurred in nine of the responses of the students and faculty for General Theory. In two instances, on grading as a significant part of the teacher's responsibility and grades as motivating students, the faculty were more affirmative in their responses. On the other hand, on the questions of class size and student attitudes influencing their grades in field experience and student teaching, the students were more affirmative. For the other four instances where there was a significant difference the faculty and students disagreed. Rather interestingly, although the students and faculty disagreed on the issue of pass-fail the figures were so close that they did not differ at the .05 level of significance.

Table 21. Percentage Distribution of Criteria for Determining Course Grades for Lower Division Courses by Students and Faculty, 1976.

Criteria	Students	Faculty
Performance in terms of an absolute standard	18.1	26.3
Performance in terms of a Bridgewater standard	20.4	25.7
Performance in terms of other students	17.9	15.4
Demonstration of effort	21.3	20.4
Completion of certain amounts of work	18.7	11.2
Other	3.4	.84

The students more strongly supported criteria which recognized effort and Bridgewater standards than criteria which would compare them with other students or an absolute standard. The faculty, on the other hand, more strongly supported "performance in terms of an absolute standard or a Bridgewater standard".

Table 22. Percentage Distribution of Criteria for Determining Course Grades for Upper Division Courses by Students and Faculty, 1976.

Criteria	Students	Faculty
Performance in terms of an absolute standard	21.5	31.7
Performance in terms of a Bridgewater standard	16.5	22.2
Performance in terms of other students	16.9	19.0
Demonstration of effort	17.8	15.3
Completion of certain amounts of work	24.8	10.1
Other	2.3	1.4

The criteria "completion of certain amounts of work" was most strongly supported by the students for upper division courses. In this choice they differed from the faculty who supported performance based on an absolute standard and their own choice for lower division courses. A possible explanation for this choice would be more recent use of programmed instruction in courses and the students' acceptance of contract learning as practiced in some classes.

Table 23. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether there Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level Between the Responses of the Students and Faculty, 1976, for Criteria for Determining Course Grades for Lower and Upper Division Courses.

Criteria	Chi-Square =	Degrees of Freedom
Lower Division Criteria	22.4864*	4
Upper Division Criteria	41.5013*	4

*Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 4 Degrees of Freedom 9.4877

As is emphasized in this Table the faculty and students differed significantly in their responses for Part III. The faculty emphasis was

on standards. In contrast, the students supported effort and the completion of certain amounts of work. The clear ideological differences in their choices is of importance to the outcome of this study.

Table 24. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: A, by Students and Faculty, 1976.

Grade Description: A	Students	Faculty
A very special grade	12.7	30.1
Grade achieved by anyone willing to work for it	21.7	9.8
Work far superior to that of most Bridgewater students	8.3	15.8
Work greatly superior to class average	15.3	23.4
Student has worked to fullest of his capacity	20.8	2.4
A numerical average in the 90's	16.8	16.7
Other	4.0	1.4

The students most strongly supported "A" as a grade which could be achieved by "any student willing to work for it" and as indicating that the student "worked to the fullest of his capacity". Both of the students' choices placed an emphasis on effort. Unlike the faculty, the students' choices were so close that only .9 percent separated them. The faculty were strongest in their support of the description of "A" as a "very special grade" and as "indicating work superior to the class average", an emphasis on unusual achievement and competition among the students.

Table 25. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: B, by Students and Faculty, 1976.

Grade Description: B	Students	Faculty
Grade indicating commendable work	21.3	32.6

Table 25. (cont.)

Grade Description: D	Students	Faculty
Grade given to most who complete assigned work	11.1	3.5
Work superior to that of most Bridgewater students	5.3	14.7
Work above the class average	15.5	23.5
Worked hard and demonstrated improvement	25.9	5.7
A numerical average in the 80's	17.3	17.8
Other	3.2	1.9

Ths students and faculty again differed in their choice of descriptors. While the students recognized effort, "worked hard and demonstrated improvement", most strongly their second choice was the first choice of the faculty, "grade indicating commendable work". This latter description would appear to be a consistent choice for the faculty. For the students, it would seem to show majority recognition that the grade of "D" cannot be achieved by simply completing the assigned work.

Table 26. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: C, by Students and Faculty, 1970.

Grade Description: C	Students	Faculty
A respectable grade for satisfactory work	23.5	34.5
A less than respectable grade	6.7	2.8
Average work for a Bridgewater student	16.4	18.9
Work at the level of the class average	21.1	19.8
Little visible effort and improvement	8.7	1.9
A numerical average in the 70's	20.0	16.7
Other	3.2	5.0

"C" as "a respectable grade" was the strongest descriptor for both students and faculty. Of all the faculty choices for letter grade descriptions this choice was the clearest with almost a fifteen point gap between it and the next choice. At the same time, this is the only instance in Part IV where the students and faculty made the same top choice.

Table 27. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: D, by Students and Faculty, 1976.

Grade Description: D	Students	Faculty
Not qualified to do more advanced work	13.8	19.3
A very poor grade	9.5	14.6
Work inferior to that of most Bridgewater students	7.5	15.6
Work below the class average	17.0	22.6
Unsatisfactory work, student has made some effort	20.6	9.4
Unsatisfactory work, student would not benefit from repeating the course	12.0	6.1
A numerical average in the 60's	16.2	11.3
Other	3.0	.7

The student emphasis for letter grade "D" was a reaffirmation of effort, "unsatisfactory work, student has made some effort". The faculty's strongest choice, "work below the class average" parallels their second choice of the three previous letter grades which related performance to class average.

Table 28. Percentage Distribution of Responses to, Application of Particular Course Grades: E, by Students and Faculty, 1976.

Grade Description: E	Students	Faculty
Students who do not complete assigned work	32.8	29.3
Failure to achieve a minimal level of competence, even though the student worked hard	17.8	33.4
A numerical average below 60	20.0	18.1
For academic dishonesty	24.8	17.3
Other	4.3	1.7

While the students most strongly supported the notion that "E" represented a failure to complete assigned work, the faculty emphasis was on a minimal level of competence. Although this latter descriptor included a reference to effort it would not appear to compromise the faculty's previous rejection of effort as a factor in the other letter grades. In this instance, as in the others, they were not strongly influenced by a student's effort.

Table 29. Results of Chi-Square Tests to Determine Whether there Was a Significant Difference at the .05 Level for the Responses of the Students and Faculty, 1976, for Application of Course Grades.

Grade	Chi-Square =	Degrees of Freedom
A	174.89*	5
B	134.61*	5
C	40.00*	5
D	78.01*	6
E	35.46*	3

*Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 3 Degrees of Freedom 7.8147, 5 Degrees of Freedom 11.0705, 6 Degrees of Freedom 12.5916.

There were significant differences between the faculty and students for all of Part IV. The students most strongly supported grade descriptions which emphasized effort or the full use of one's ability. The faculty, on the other hand, generally selected the description which related the student's performance to the other members of the class.

As mentioned in the description of the procedures for the student questionnaire, there were two questions on honors and catalog definitions of grades which were worded differently on the faculty questionnaire than on the student questionnaire. The student question on honors was an objective one, whether the students believed more rigorous criteria should be established for honors. They rejected this notion with a 69.6 percent negative vote. The faculty were asked what criteria should be established for honors. 59 of the 119 faculty who responded to the questionnaire replied to this question. The following Table summarizes their replies.

Table 30. Faculty Recommended Criteria for Honors, 1976.

Criteria	Number of Faculty Recommending
An honors project in addition to honors QPA	20
Outstanding scholastic achievement	10
A more demanding average than presently required	9
Excellence in major area of study	6
A fixed percentage of graduates for honors	6
A requirement of honor courses	5
Departmental recommendation for honors	4
Evidence of scholarly writing ability	3

As may be noted the student response did not favor the establishment of more rigorous criteria. However, for those faculty who did take

the time to recommend specific criteria their emphasis was on stricter requirements for honors.

The percentage of faculty agreement with the catalog definitions of grades was reported in Table 8 on page 40. Essentially, the faculty supported the catalog definitions by 90 percent or better for each of the letter grades. The students were queried whether the faculty followed the definitions in practice. The following Table presents the student responses.

Table 31. Percentage of Students Who Believed Faculty Follow Current Catalog Definitions of Grades, Bridgewater State College, 1976.

Catalog Definition	Percentage of Students
A - Superior	65.5
B - Good	80.0
C - Satisfactory	74.1
D - Poor	75.4
E - Failure	82.2

The students' responses indicated they believed the faculty were following the catalog definitions in practice. However, it should be noted that although 96 percent of the faculty subscribed to "A" as "superior", Table 8, page 40, only 65.6 percent of the students believed that the faculty were following the definitions in practice.

A Survey of the Academic Departments on Grading Issues

The third project of this study was a survey of the academic departments in cooperation with the Academic Dean. Three questions of concern to the Academic Dean were submitted to the 23 departments of the college. In submitting these questions to the departments the Dean had

accepted recommendation No. 40 of the Faculty Council that a full and open discussion be held in each department of the grading issue. When the department meetings were held the results were forwarded to the author of this study and his report to the Academic Dean is summarized here. The report has been presented to the Faculty Council by the Dean. The questions addressed the issues of institutional policy on grading, the criteria for grading, and the type and frequency of evaluations. This project was complementary to the faculty and student questionnaires and enhanced the completeness of the research as it provided feedback from the departments as a unit rather than from each individual faculty member.

The Findings

All of the departments concurred with the official grading system of the college. The departments of Chemical Sciences, Educational Services, Elementary Education, Foreign Languages, History and Political Science recommended the use of + and -'s.

Four recommendations were made on pass-fail. Health and Physical Education suggested a specific study be made on pass-fail. Chemical Sciences expressed sentiment for a very limited pass-fail, limited to specifically designated courses or a small number of elective courses outside a student's major program. Educational Services noted that future grade studies should concentrate on competency based equivalencies for grades and courses which may be best graded by pass-fail. Philosophy recommended the expansion of pass-fail on a limited basis outside the student's major while Physics encouraged its use in certain introductory, survey or general education courses in order to encourage students to enroll in courses reported to be difficult.

The second question dealt with the issue of courses taught in multiple sections. The 23 departments supported the notion that while the objectives of such courses must be commonly agreed upon, they supported the prerogative of each faculty member to evaluate his/her course.

The third issue questioned whether the departments agreed to mid-semester evaluations. In practice, all departments have some kind of evaluation for mid-semester. The Music department was divided on the issue, 3 to 3, while the Economics department felt it should be the decision of the instructor whether mid-semester evaluation was necessary.

Summary of the Findings

The findings provide an insight into the attitudes of the faculty and students on grading and honors. The faculty and students both supported the concepts that grading is a significant responsibility of the faculty and that grades motivate students. Two thirds of the faculty believed that their grading practices are not consistent with the grading pattern of the college. The students supported the extension of pass-fail while the faculty did not. Although the students rejected more rigorous criteria for honors the faculty supported them.

The faculty, almost unanimously, concurred with the current catalog definitions of the grades and the students generally agreed that these definitions were followed in practice. The faculty emphasized standards as the chief criterion in determining course grades, though in lower division courses they did take effort into account. The students strongly supported effort and the completion of certain amounts of work as the most important criteria. In the application of course grades the students most strongly supported grade descriptions which emphasized effort and the full use of one's ability. The faculty, on the other hand,

generally selected the descriptions which related the student's performance to the other members of the class.

In Chapter Four the implications of these findings for Bridgewater State College are discussed. Particular attention is given to the findings in light of the grading and honors issues raised elsewhere in higher education as detailed in the "Review of the Literature". Appropriate recommendations are presented to Committee "A" of the Faculty Council.

IV

Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

This study was undertaken so that the Faculty Council might have the information needed for modification of the present system of grading and honors. A striking aspect of the results of the three research projects which were reported in Chapter 3 has been the consistency of the Bridgewater faculty's attitude toward grading. The faculty responses to the questionnaire for the 1972 and 1976 studies did not differ on any questions though the percentages of their responses varied somewhat. In the survey of the departments there was substantial agreement with the present grading system. Not surprisingly, the students did differ from the current faculty on twelve questions for the 1976 questionnaire.

Catalog Definitions of Grades

A number of authors reviewed in the literature suggested that a logical point of departure for a solution to grading systems and their problems would be the faculty acceptance of the institutional definitions of the grades. Since such definitions represent the institutional philosophy of grading it is generally assumed that any such definitions be uniformly accepted and applied. The Bridgewater faculty response to Part II on both questionnaires was overwhelmingly in agreement with the catalog definitions of the grades, with the percentage of current faculty agreement for all of the letter grades at 91 percent or better.

The students, who had been questioned as to whether the faculty followed the definitions in practice, generally agreed that the faculty

did, though there were between 20 and 25 percent who disagreed. Such disagreement might well be related to the perception of faculty and students elsewhere that differences in grading practices do exist and the value of grades does differ among major fields. Additionally, the student findings would seem to be corroborated by the faculty self perception in "General Theory". Sixty-four percent of the faculty responded that they did not believe their grading patterns fit the grading pattern of the college, while 68 percent felt their grading patterns did fit the general patterns of their department.

The point to be made here is that although the faculty agree to the present catalog definitions their practices would suggest their actions are at variance with their attitudes. This is a phenomenon reflected elsewhere in higher education as well as at Bridgewater. However, if the current grading system is to be strengthened it would be appropriate for Bridgewater to consider seriously the recommendation found in the literature. This would call for a reconciliation of the disparate practices to reflect a dominant institutional philosophy. Unless this reconciliation takes place and the definitions are clearly communicated to all there would appear to be little chance that the system will be strengthened.

One particular point should be noted for the findings of Part II. The students' strongest disagreement with faculty practice was on the question of the "A" grade. 34.4 percent of the students felt the faculty did not subscribe to "A" as superior in practice. Two possible implications may be drawn from this disagreement. The first possibility would suggest the students' recognition of the variability of grades among departments while the second would perceive the students' disagreement as

a desire for a more liberal interpretation of "A". While the first possibility would be consistent with the findings of other colleges that the value of grades does differ between major fields, the second possibility would be difficult to justify in view of its inflationary consequences. It should be recalled that the lowest percentage of "A"'s granted in recent years at Bridgewater was 25 percent at the same time that the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of the entering students has shown a phenomenonal decline. In light of these facts it would be difficult to accept as feasible or tenable that there be a more liberal interpretation of "A".

General Theory

The General Theory section, Part I, addressed the underlying attitudes of the faculty and students toward grading. The results show a clear acceptance on the part of the faculty and students of grading as a significant part of the responsibility of the teacher. Such acceptance reflects the mainstream found in much of the literature. Though 20 percent of the students disagreed, there would not seem to be any foundation for asserting strong support in the form of the radical students' stand of the sixties against grading. In fact this Bridgewater percentage closely parallels the percentage of freshmen nationally who felt that grades should be abolished.

While the faculty felt that grades provide useful information to the "outside world" the students did not. The faculty view is consistent with faculty attitudes studied elsewhere that grades represent the best resource presently available for the sorting of abilities. Though many faculty would prefer not to perform this function they see the institutionalization of grades as the only means by which performance may

currently be assessed. The students' rejection of this position was not surprising as they often question the ability of grades to measure the whole person. This position of the Bridgewater students reflects two themes which run throughout the literature, the one which questions whether students' grades accurately represent their achievement, and the other which contends that college grades are not positively correlated with many indices of success after college. In summary, the faculty do seem to support and accept the role of credentialling but the students are reluctant to acknowledge that such a use of grades for off-campus credentialling does them justice.

Both faculty and students agree, that in general, grades motivate students to work harder than they otherwise would. The students' stance on this issue does reflect a certain ambivalence on their part if, on the one hand, their rejection of grades as useful information for the outside world is considered, and on the other, their acceptance of grading as a significant part of the teacher's responsibility is remembered. Finally, while the literature reveals student division on grades as motivators, the faculty of Bridgewater, as elsewhere, do see grades as providing motivation for better performance.

The faculty acceptance of their grading patterns as being in conformity with their own department but not with the pattern of the college is consistent with findings in other surveys. Implicitly the faculty realize that variable standards are eventually reflected in grading practices. Those who have studied these variations have found that humanists, natural scientists and social scientists often differ in their standards. In point of fact some would question whether it is desirable or possible to come to a common agreement regarding academic standards.

At the same time, however, it would seem only fair that every attempt should be made to bring about as much reconciliation as possible. In so doing, the earlier monition, that a sudden reversal of current grading systems is not necessarily desirable and certainly would not be acceptable to most students and faculty, would be a prudent caution.

Any attempt at reconciliation at Bridgewater must take into account the faculty self perception that showed 71 percent do not believe the current discussion on the grading system had influenced their grading practices with 34.5 percent of the students holding the same view. While 42.2 percent of the students did answer affirmatively, 23.1 percent replied they had "no opinion". This was the students highest indication of doubt and when coupled with their negative vote would seem to indicate more than a little reservation about the outcome of the discussions. The student and faculty vote for this question would seem to suggest that the grading discussions will be efficacious only if there is more direct involvement of the faculty and students. Since only a few members of the faculty are actively involved in the Academic Standing Committee and the Faculty Council it would appear that their debate has not achieved its desired effect. The involvement of the students would certainly create a sharper focus on the problem.

A considerable difference of opinion occurred between the students and faculty on the question of criterion and norm referenced assessment, with twice as many faculty as students favoring norm referenced assessment. It is not surprising the students' responses reflected their desire not to be evaluated in competition with one another. While the new certification requirements in education posit the mastery concept the full impact of this has yet to reach many of the departments. The discussion in the

literature suggest that when the new requirements do impact on the departments it will have a beneficial effect on teaching and learning. The faculty will be forced to be much more clear and specific about expected outcomes than they are now. This is precisely what is happening this year in the Department of Educational Services under pressure from the State Department of Education. One explanation of the faculty results would be the fact that many of the faculty themselves have been exposed to the process of teach-test, teach-test without establishing what the students previously had known or retained. Thus, the present outcome is not surprising but does suggest the faculty will have to modify their position to accommodate the new certification requirements.

While both faculty and students emphasized quizzes as the strongest determinants of their grades they differed on the relative importance of the other choices. The faculty's support of final exams was not matched by that of the students who emphasized class participation. This student emphasis is reflected elsewhere in their selections of the meaning of the letter grades and in support of attitude as an influence on the grade given. The faculty see such factors as an influence on grades given for student teaching and field experience while the students would apply them to the classroom as well. On the part of the students there is the recurrent theme that effort be rewarded in the final grade.

By relatively similar margins both faculty and students rejected attendance as an influence on the student's grade. While the campus attitudes have generally removed attendance as an influence, possibly due to its previous relationship to "in loco parentis", it is interesting to note that 41 percent of the students and faculty did see it as an influence. The faculty reaction may well be attributed to those who are more

conservative, while the student reaction might be related to their strong support of effort as a factor in their grades. It is not uncommon for students to cite their presence as a cause for a higher grade, while at the same time other students insist that the right to be present or not is a question of their own responsibility.

The survey of the departments found them to be in agreement with the concept that courses taught in multiple sections have commonly accepted objectives. They supported the prerogative of each faculty member to evaluate her/his own course. This latter view would be consistent with the findings in the literature that diversity in evaluation occurs within courses taught in the same department and even within sections of the same course.

Both the departments and the students agreed that there should be some kind of evaluation prior to mid-semester. The underlying concern behind this question has been the problems associated with infrequent evaluation. In such instances the students may be unaware of their performance until very late in the semester or even until its completion. The findings here would support the concept that for undergraduates this is not a desirable practice. Such infrequent evaluations should be limited to very specific instances, preferably for upperclassmen.

A concern of the faculty that economic conditions were having an impact on the college and its grading practices was the genesis of the question on class size and grading. Both faculty and students agreed that class size does influence the grading practices of the faculty. It has been generally observed that a number of large classes are frequently tested on machine scored tests. While in some instances this may not be an inappropriate procedure the process creates a sense of loss of the

personal relationship of student and faculty member. Further, it places limitations on the testing process itself, on the nature and type of questions asked.

The faculty and students disagreed as to whether the time allocated for submitting grades was a factor in the grades submitted. Though some faculty had previously indicated concern over the short period of time between final exams and the submission of their grades, 70 percent of the faculty rejected time as a factor. The students' response would seem to indicate their concern that the shortness of time for the faculty to submit their grades creates a pressure on the faculty that is not in the best interest of the students.

The students were in favor of the expansion of the pass-fail option and the faculty were in opposition. This result was not surprising as previous studies at other colleges have shown that the students generally seek wider use of the option and the faculty do not. What is surprising about these results is the narrowness of the students' afirmative answer: only 1.7 percent separated the affirmative and the negative answers. This finding would indicate a change from what has been experienced elsewhere as the Bridgewater students seem reluctant to take a strong stand in the form of expanding the option. The pressures of competition for graduate school and of finding a job in a tight economy may be the reasons why the students would be reluctant not to be recorded with a letter grade.

The final issue in "General Theory" was the question of honors. The students opposed more rigorous criteria for honors by 69.6 percent. Those faculty who did specify criteria for honors all stressed the need for additional requirements. Neither of these results was unpredictable

as they were similar to the opinions found in the literature search. What is difficult to understand is why 60 of the faculty failed to answer the question since this matter has been a matter of debate in both the Academic Standing Committee and the Faculty Council. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the faculty who replied to the question were either more definite in their opinions or more intent on answering the questions than those who did not. It would also be fair to assume that some of the faculty who did not answer the question would be content with the status quo. In summary, the faculty response echoed the committee discussions that honors be more restricted, while the students opposed the imposition of more restrictive criteria for honors.

Criteria for Determining Course Grades

The faculty most strongly supported criteria for both lower and upper division courses which were based on standards. For lower division courses the students' strongest choices were "effort" and "Bridgewater standards", while for upper division courses their choices reflected the criteria which called for completion of certain amounts of work and absolute standards. The faculty view is consistent with findings elsewhere wherein faculty generally call for criteria based on standards with less support for those based on effort or mastery. However, the distribution of the faculty vote does reflect minority faculty voices throughout higher education which call for greater consideration of the individual with an emphasis on effort. This emphasis on effort is clearly the first choice of the students for lower division courses and is a thread which runs through much of their philosophy on grading as seen in the literature and in this study.

The students' strong emphasis on mastery for upper division courses may be traced to the influence of programmed instruction courses and competency based requirements in the education courses. Since the faculty ranked this criteria last of the specified criteria it would appear they will have to accommodate their practices in the future with this in mind. This is especially so when the present strong emphasis of the newer certification requirements for competency based standards impacts on the departments.

Application of Course Grades

Not surprisingly, the faculty and students differed in their choice for "Application of Course Grades". The students emphasized effort or the full use of one's ability as the primary descriptors for each of the grades. This position is consistent with the students' attitudes expressed elsewhere in the questionnaire and in related articles in the literature. It is not an unusual finding since it takes into account the rather human feeling of the consumer to get the most for his money, that every beneficial aspect be taken into account.

The faculty view, on the other hand, emphasized the students' performance as related to the other members of the class. This position is consistent with the previously mentioned faculty attitudes at Bridgewater and elsewhere which accept grading as a sorting process with implications for the outside world of graduate schools and jobs. It further confirms the faculty's position on criteria which stressed standards rather than effort. In all of these responses the same thread runs through the faculty sections, a reliance on standards by which the faculty compare one student with the other.

Summary of the Major Issues

Modification of the Current Grading System

The findings of the research projects of this study indicate there is apparent substantial agreement among the faculty with the current grading system. The faculty responses to the questionnaires in 1972 and 1976 reveal very consistent attitudes toward grading which are basically supportive of the present system. During the same period of time, though various committees had made specific proposals for the system's modification, no changes were enacted. As the findings of this study indicate the faculty do not feel that those proposals or the discussions accompanying them had influenced or changed faculty grading practices. This is noteworthy because the faculty members of those committees did believe changes should be made. In their assessment of their own grading practices 64 percent of the faculty did not believe their grading practices conformed to those of the college as a whole. This discrepancy between theory and practice on the part of the faculty is an important aspect of the findings. It creates a clear need for reconciliation of the discrepancy if there is to be fairness in the grading system.

The students, on the other hand, openly questioned the system. Their primary contention questions whether the current grading system is able to represent adequately their true achievements. Second, they believe there are variations which occur when the grading system is put into practice, a view the faculty confirm in their own perceptions of themselves. Third, the students question the failure of the system to take into account the effort they make in their courses. Fourth, as the subsequent discussion of the remaining major issues details there are several specific areas in which the faculty and students differ. For any meaningful resolution to these points there is a need for the present system to be modified.

Institutional Definitions: Acceptance and Practice

The faculty strongly accept the institutional definitions of their grades in theory but by their own admission differ in the practice of them. The responses of the students indicate their recognition of this dichotomy which is also to be found in a number of colleges throughout the country. The implication of these findings suggests that any future discussion of the grading system must take this disparity into account. Unless the various departments of the college are able to agree on a common practice for the institutional definitions it will be impossible to claim that there really is one policy in effect at the college. Failure to resolve these differences creates not only a lack of a common base upon which the grading system is predicated but also implicitly permits practices which are unfair to the students who are evaluated.

Criteria for Course Grades and Their Application

The faculty strongly emphasized criteria based on standards while the students' criteria stressed effort and completion of specified amounts of work. When these concepts were translated into the applications of the course grades the students emphasized effort and the full use of one's ability as the focal point. The faculty's applications stressed the student's performance as related to other members of the class, an emphasis which is in conformity with their reliance on standards as the basis for judgement.

The findings here are not unexpected. They do single out, however, that any acceptance of the practices inherent in a grading system by both faculty and students calls for a great deal of give and take by both parties. Up to the present such discussions have not taken place on this campus and it is difficult to estimate what effect they will have in the

future. One thing is certain, however, if the disparity is to be resolved both sides will have to make accommodations. Certainly the new certification requirements will force adjustments on the part of the faculty.

Grades Affected by Extrinsic Conditions

Three extrinsic conditions were considered for their effect on the grading practices of the college: attendance, class size and the time allocated for submitting grades. No one pattern runs through the responses to the three questions. Both students and faculty rejected attendance as a factor while acknowledging that class size was. This is understandable as attendance policies in recent years have either been non-existent or have generally been politely ignored by all parties. On the other hand, class size was recognized as an influence on the grading practices of the faculty. Since larger classes generated by economic influences are often at the heart of this matter it is questionable whether any alleviation of this problem is in sight. Such classes are frequently tested on machine scored tests, the alternative to which requires time consuming effort. At this point it does not seem likely that funds will be forthcoming to provide assistance to the faculty so alternative methods will have to be considered.

The faculty did not believe there was insufficient time for them to submit their grades. The students, on the other hand, were concerned that the faculty have sufficient time and did feel any restraints on the faculty would not be in the students' best interests. Normally the time factor is traceable in the first semester to the need for the Academic Standing Committee to act on probation and separation cases prior to the start of the second semester. In the second semester the greater pressure would occur in the case of the grades of the graduating seniors. Since

the resolution of both of these cases would lengthen the school year there is some question as to whether the students would establish a priority for a longer school year as a solution to the problem.

Pass-Fail

Though the faculty rejection of the expansion of pass-fail was rather predictable the close margin of the students' approval was somewhat of a surprise. Economic pressures of recent years would certainly contribute to the change in students' feelings. The resolution of this issue necessitates a greater interaction between faculty and faculty and students. The recent attempts to expand pass-fail have met with failure as the committees admitted they need more input from both faculty and students.

This in itself is a rather interesting development because there were those within the faculty who automatically assumed that the students would want the expansion of pass-fail to student teaching. As the results of this survey show such an automatic assumption is unwarranted. Similarly, faculty proposals to expand the option within the discretion of the individual departments have been frustrated because they failed to build a base upon which to gather support. The recommendation of this study for pass-fail takes this need for greater input from both faculty and students into account.

More Rigorous Standards for Honors

Not unpredictably, the students opposed the imposition of more restrictive criteria for honors while the faculty responses stressed the need for additional requirements. This stance of the faculty would appear to be justified in view of the steady increase in honor students

Table 1, p. 5) during a time when the entering characteristics of the students showed a pronounced decline, (Table 3, p. 6).

One concern that has been repeatedly voiced is that honors become meaningless if they become the usual rather than the unusual. If honors are to become as meaningful as they formerly were, as when the percentage of students receiving honors was about 7 rather than the current 23, it is obvious that some changes must be made in the requirements for honors. The faculty proposals and survey responses demonstrate they would support such steps. What is needed is greater interaction with the students so that they will come to realize that any step to strengthen honors will be in their best interests. Otherwise, they will continue the pressure begun in the sixties for higher grades without realizing the inflationary averages and honors will bring them less results.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that a joint faculty student committee be established to examine the differences of opinion for grading and honors so as to study the need for modifications of the present system and to make any necessary recommendations to the Faculty Council.

The one clear and unmistakable finding of this study is the need for greater participation and input from both faculty and students on the problems of the grading system. The research indicates a wide range of differences between the students and faculty, as well as a diversity of practices within the faculty. Additionally, the lengthy and continued nature of the discussions which have not resulted in any definitive action being taken by the Faculty Council suggests the need for a catalyst which will trigger a break-through. This proposed committee provides such an opportunity.

With the creation of this joint committee one striking advance will be made, the inclusion of the students in the ongoing discussions. Though the recent Faculty Council debates recognize this need with a call for public hearings on the issue of pass-fail the presence of the students on this joint committee should be based on the recognition of their place in the academic community. Failure to take the students' opinion into account jeopardizes the acceptability of any modification which may be proposed.

This committee must consider, first of all, the reconciliation of the disparate practices which have been found in this survey. Unless this reconciliation takes place any foundation for strengthening the grading system would be lacking. The major question which is raised by these disparities is how to obtain a compromise on the part of all the individuals involved, faculty and students. Such discussions must begin with a consideration of the present catalog definitions of the grades. If there is failure to agree on a common practice for the institutional definitions it will be impossible to claim there is one policy in effect at the college which is fair to all the students. The faculty acceptance that grades provide useful information to the outside world would recognize the need for such a policy.

It is suggested that the committee begin its deliberation with the current grading system before considering the addition of the modifiers, + and -. Such additions would serve only to complicate this issue if they were implemented before agreement is reached on the current grading system.

Secondly, the committee should consider the criteria upon which the grades are based. This is an area in which there is clear cut disagreement between faculty and students, especially in the areas of effort

and mastery. There is ample precedent for this type of consideration as even under the present system faculty have restraints imposed on them by the college, e.g., policies on make up tests and quizzes during the semester are set by each department. Certainly, one effect of competency based instruction as required by the newer requirements of the State Department of Education would be how the grade is arrived at. These requirements will force clarification of what individual grades stand for while at the same time students will have to make a stronger commitment to obtain the grade.

Thirdly, the three specific recommendations which follow should be considered by the joint committee as measures which will strengthen the current grading system.

2. It is recommended that the expansion of pass-fail be left to the discretion of the departments.

Each department would determine those courses in which the students could take pass-fail. The advantage of this proposal is that it would permit various models to be constructed, one of which could eventually become the policy of the college. One of the striking elements of the results of the faculty research was the noticeable lack of change in faculty positions between 1972 and 1976. It has been suggested that this was due in part to a lack of models which the faculty might observe and judge. By involving each department in the discussion of the pass-fail option there is a much greater chance that the action of some departments will act as a catalyst on the others. Additionally, since the faculty and students in the same departments are much closer it is more likely that student participation in the decision will take place. The desired outcome of this process would be the development of one overall policy for the college.

3. It is recommended that the joint faculty-student committee establish a fixed percentage for honors in each department. The requirements for the attainment of honors are to be determined by the departments themselves.

This proposal is intended to address the inflationary process which has steadily increased the percentage of students on honors. At Bridgewater this has been occurring while the entering characteristics of the students have been declining. If this proposal were to be adopted it would restore the meaningfulness and recognition that was formerly inherent in the award.

The proposal does not accept the 6 percent recommendation of the Academic Standing Committee as such a recommendation would seem to ignore student attitudes on this issue entirely. It leaves to the joint faculty-student committee the responsibility to effect a compromise between the recommendations of the Academic Standing Committee and the recent honors percentages of over 20 percent.

Additionally, this recommendation details two significant changes. First, the percentage recommended by the joint committee would be for each department rather than college-wide. This recommendation would address the problem raised by the disparity of grades given throughout the college and protect the interests of those students who are in the more difficult majors. This would assume that the students of every department would have a chance to share in the awards. Second, the criteria would be established by the departments themselves. Again, this involvement, as in the recommendation for pass-fail, would insure that all of the faculty in the departments would be involved, in contrast to the present situation wherein only the committee members are directly involved in the grading discussions.

Each department would have to reconcile its own differences as the honors issue becomes focused on the student's own major. One possibility which might emerge would be that only the professional courses of the student's major would be considered in determining eligibility for honors. In any case, as in recommendation number 2, the department standards could become a model which could be adopted for a single college policy. This final outcome of the process is important. The faculty research reveals the faculty do accept the concept that the institution provides useful information to the outside world. Such a sorting process demands that there be a single institutional policy.

4. It is recommended that the college adopt the use of "The Relative Transcript".

The Relative Transcript is a fresh approach to grade reporting which should be considered by the joint committee. It includes not only the student's grade in each course but also the number of students enrolled and the average grade in the course. An example of the transcript would look like this:

History: C 19 B

French: B 28 B

In the History example above, the student's grade is C. There were 19 members in the class, and the average grade awarded was a B. Those who advocate the Relative Transcript believe that it will curb grade inflation and help students to compete more fairly by providing more accurate data to graduate schools and employers.

The consideration of such a transcript is important to Bridgewater. First, as the faculty and student research shows both groups recognize there are differences in grading between departments and even within

departments. This transcript provides important information about the student's real level of achievement as it records the courses so as to show those whose level is high or low. Second, as the faculty responses indicate they accept the sorting process which establishes grades as useful to the outside world. In using The Relative Transcript both graduate schools and employers will have additional information for interpreting the meaning of the grades received by the student. Third, it addresses the apprehension of those faculty who are concerned about grade inflation by providing data which could be used over the years as grading patterns change within the college.

In practice this transcript does not adversely affect the faculty or students. Its use does not imply a quota for grades, does allow classes which deserve all high or low grades to receive them and may be used in contract grading. For the students it provides insights about their achievement levels which are realistic and accurate information to both employers and graduate schools. In the context of this study it is an exciting possibility which will require a great deal of study from the joint committee as it is a definite departure from present practice.

Conclusion

This study sought to obtain the necessary input from both students and faculty so that the committees involved in the grading discussions would have the appropriate data on which to base their recommendations.

The findings of the study revealed one underlying need, the need for greater participation by both faculty and students in the deliberative process if the grading system of Bridgewater State College is to be strengthened. This need is clearly illustrated by the differences of opinion between the faculty and students on some major issues. The faculty

supported the current grading system in theory though their practices revealed that variations do exist, variations of which the students are aware. The faculty emphasized standards whereas the students' emphasis was on effort and mastery. While the students and faculty differed very slightly on the issue of pass-fail they were on opposite ends of any attempt to make honors more restrictive.

Four recommendations evolved from the study. They seek to reconcile the differences among the faculty and between the faculty and students by inviting the greatest possible involvement from both groups. In the end, however, an aphorism of Eric Hoffer says it best: "In human affairs every solution serves only to sharpen the problem, to show us more clearly what we are up against. There are no final solutions."

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Appendix A
Faculty Questionnaire: Number of Faculty Responses 1972 and 1976

PART I: GENERAL THEORY

Instructions: There are three possible answers for each question, please circle the one which is most appropriate for you: 1-agree; 2-disagree; 3-no opinion.

			Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1.	Do you believe that grading is a significant part of your responsibility as a teacher?	1976	107	8	4
		1972	85	5	6
2.	Do you believe that grades provide useful information to the "outside world" (graduate schools, employers, etc.)?	1976	89	13	16
		1972	76	10	10
3.	Do you believe that, generally speaking, grades motivate students to work harder than they otherwise would?	1976	103	7	9
		1972	81	7	8
4.	Do you find that your own grading practices fit the general pattern for your department (see enclosed graph)?	1976	78	31	5
		1972	56	26	6
5.	Do you find that your own grading practices fit the general pattern for the college (see enclosed graph)?	1976	33	73	8
		1972	25	62	2
6.	Would you prefer to see the present grading system replaced entirely or in any part by pass/fail? (Please explain below).	1976	44	63	5
		1972	33	39	8
7.	Do you think it legitimate to consider a student's attitude and personal behavior as factors influencing his grade:	1972	29	47	15
	A. Classroom	1976	36	62	12
	B. Student Teaching	1976	83	9	9
	C. Field Experience	1976	69	11	19
8.	Do you believe that attendance should influence a student's grade.	1976	43	52	10
		1972	38	43	11
9.	Do you believe that class size affects your grading practices?	1976	72	42	4
10.	Do you believe the discussion of the grading system has influenced your grading?	1976	26	81	7
11.	Does the time allotted for submitting your grades affect your grading practices?	1976	28	84	7

12. Which of the following do you use to determine the student's grades: Class Participation 73, Final Exams 106, Research 96, Tests 110, Others 42.

13. Which of the following definitions do you use in your assessment of students:

Criterion Referenced Assessment which attempts to express how nearly a pupil's performance approximates a prespecified performance, i.e., objectives. 52

13. (Cont'd.)
Norm Referenced Assessment which attempts to express how well a pupil's performance compares with the performance of a peer group or a norm. 32
BOTH 15

14. What criteria should be established for Honors?

Comments:

PART II: CATALOG DEFINITIONS OF GRADES

Do you agree with the following catalog definitions:

	1976		1972	
A--superior	97 yes	4 no	84 yes	7 no
B--good	96 yes	9 no	79 yes	13 no
C--satisfactory	97 yes	7 no	78 yes	12 no
D--poor	94 yes	9 no	80 yes	10 no
E--failure	90 yes	8 no	84 yes	6 no

Comments:

PART III: CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING COURSE GRADES

Place a double check next to the most important criterion for determining grades in your courses. Single checks next to other criteria you use.

		lower division courses	upper division courses	cont. studies
1. Student's performance judged in terms of an absolute standard.	1976	94	110	74
	1972	76	87	52
2. Student's performance judged in terms of a Bridgewater standard (the level of competence that can be expected of Bridgewater Students in general).		92	77	60
		73	57	52
3. Student's performance judged in relation to that of other students in the class.		55	66	55
		69	45	46
4. Student's demonstration of effort and/or improvement.		73	53	47
		70	49	36
5. Student's completion of a certain amount of work (different amounts of work to be specified for different grades).		40	35	20
		35	34	27
6. Other.		3	5	3
		5	2	?

PART IV: APPLICATION OF PARTICULAR COURSE GRADES

Respondents are asked to check as many of the following as are consistent with your own grading, and to double check those which you consider most important.

"A"

1972	1976		
102	122	1.	A very special grade, for students I would not hesitate to recommend for advanced work in the area of the course.
29	40	2.	A grade which can probably be achieved by any student willing to work for it.
52	64	3.	Indicates work far superior to that of most Bridgewater students.
83	95	4.	Indicates work greatly superior to the class average.
10	10	5.	The student has worked to the fullest of his capacity, even though his work may not be truly superior.
50	68	6.	A numerical average in the 90's.
9	6	7.	Other.

"B"

100	119	1.	A grade indicating commendable work.
8	13	2.	A grade to be given to most students, as long as they satisfactorily complete the assigned work.
37	54	3.	Indicates work superior to that of most Bridgewater students.
69	86	4.	Indicates work above the class average.
20	21	5.	The student has worked hard and demonstrated some improvement.
47	65	6.	A numerical average in the 80's.
5	7	7.	Other.

"C"

1972	1976		
88	122	1.	A "respectable" grade for satisfactory work.
14	10	2.	A less than respectable grade.
51	67	3.	Indicates average work for a Bridgewater student.
52	70	4.	Indicates work at the level of the class average.
15	7	5.	The student has made little visible effort and little improvement.
46	59	6.	A numerical average in the 70's.
4	18	7.	Other.

"D"

65	82	1.	An indication that the student is probably not qualified to do more advanced work in the area of the course.
60	62	2.	A very poor grade, tantamount to "failing with credit."
53	66	3.	Indicates work inferior to that of most Bridgewater students.
65	96	4.	Indicates work below the class average.
31	40	5.	Unsatisfactory work, but the student has made some effort.
27	26	6.	Unsatisfactory work, but the student probably wouldn't benefit from repeating the course (for courses taken to fulfill general education requirements.)
43	48	7.	A numerical average in the 60's.
7	3	8.	Other.

"E"

79	100	1.	Given to students who do not complete the assigned work.
90	114	2.	For failure to achieve a minimal level of competence, even though the student may have worked hard.
43	62	3.	A numerical average below 60.
49	59	4.	For proven plagiarism, cheating on an examination, or other academic dishonesty.
6	6	5.	Other.

Appendix B
Student Questionnaire: Number of Student Responses 1976

Major Department _____

PART I: GENERAL THEORY

Instructions: There are three possible answers for each question, please circle the one which is most appropriate for you: 1-agree; 2-disagree; 3-no opinion.

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1. Do you believe that grading is a significant part of the responsibility of a teacher?	293	78	21
2. Do you believe that grades provide useful information to the "outside world" (graduate schools, employers, etc.)?	137	230	29
3. Do you believe that, generally speaking, grades motivate students to work harder than they otherwise would?	303	73	20
4. Do you believe that a student should be evaluated prior to mid-semester?	208	134	5
5. Would you prefer to see the present grading system replaced entirely or in any part by pass/fail?	190	183	23
6. Do you think it legitimate to consider a student's attitude and personal behavior as factors influencing his/her grade in any or all of these areas:			
A. Classroom	293	84	19
B. Student Teaching	365	14	15
C. Field Experience	351	23	20
7. Do you believe that attendance should influence a student's grade?	163	207	25
8. Do you believe that class size (large or small) affects the grading practices of a teacher?	356	32	12
9. Do you believe that the faculty discussion of the grading system of the College will influence the grading practices of an individual faculty member?	164	134	90
10. Do you believe that the requirement that a teacher submit their grades 72 hours following the final examination affects his/her grading practices?	267	63	64
11. In view of the greater percentage of students receiving honors should the criteria established for honors be more rigorous.	58	278	63

12. Please check as many of the following which you believe are appropriate in determining a student's grade: Class Participation 262, Final Exams 224, Research 222, Tests 334, Others 184.

13. Which of the following definitions do you believe best represents how a student should be graded?
Criterion Referenced Assessment: a student receives a grade based on how closely the student achieves the stated objectives of the course. In this system the student is not competing against other students. 320
Norm Referenced Assessment: a student receives a grade in relationship to how he/she achieves in comparison with a norm or other members of the class. In this system the student is competing against the other students. 58

PART II: CATALOG DEFINITIONS OF GRADES

Do you believe that the following catalog definitions are being followed by the faculty with respect to the grading practices at Bridgewater:

A--superior	235 yes	123 no
B--good	285 yes	71 no
C--satisfactory	264 yes	92 no
D--poor	279 yes	91 no
E--failure	287 yes	62 no

PART III: CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING COURSE GRADES

Place a double check next to the most important criterion which should be used for determining grades. Single checks next to other criteria which should be used. Lower division refers to courses in the freshman and sophomore years. Upper division to courses in the junior and senior years.

	lower division courses	upper division courses
1. Student's performance judged in terms of an absolute standard.	210	168
2. Student's performance judged in terms of a Bridgewater standard (the level of competence that can be expected of Bridgewater students in general).	237	129
3. Student's performance judged in relation to that of other students in the class.	208	132
4. Student's demonstration of effort and/or improvement.	248	139
5. Student's completion of a certain amount of work (different amounts of work to be specified for different grades).	217	194
6. Other.	40	18

PART IV: APPLICATION OF PARTICULAR COURSE GRADES

Students are asked to check as many of the following as are consistent with their view of grading, and to double check those which would be considered most important.

"A"

205 1. A very special grade, for students who would be recommended for advanced work in the area of the course.

349 2. A grade which can probably be achieved by any student willing to work for it.

134 3. Indicates work far superior to that of most Bridgewater students.

247 4. Indicates work greatly superior to the class average.

335 5. The student has worked to the fullest of his capacity, even though his work may not be truly superior.

271 6. A numerical average in the 90's.

65 7. Other.

"B"

325 1. A grade indicating commendable work.

170 2. A grade to be given to most students, as long as they satisfactorily complete the assigned work.

81 3. Indicates work superior to that of most Bridgewater students.

237 4. Indicates work above the class average.

395 5. The student has worked hard and demonstrated some improvement.

264 6. A numerical average in the 80's.

49 7. Other.

"C"

282 1. A "respectable" grade for satisfactory work.

81 2. A less than respectable grade.

197 3. Indicates average work for a Bridgewater student.

253 4. Indicates work at the level of the class average.

104 5. The student has made little visible effort and little improvement.

239 6. A numerical average in the 70's

39 7. Other.

"D"

179 1. An indication that the student is probably not qualified to do more advanced work in the area of the course.

124 2. A very poor grade, tantamount to "failing with credit."

98 3. Indicates work inferior to that of most Bridgewater students.

221 4. Indicates work below the class average.

268 5. Unsatisfactory work, but the student has made some effort.

156 6. Unsatisfactory work, but the student probably wouldn't benefit from repeating the course (for courses taken to fulfill general education requirements).

210 7. A numerical average in the 60's.

35 8. Other.

"E"

336 1. Given to students who do not complete the assigned work.

183 2. For failure to achieve a minimal level of competence, even though the student may have worked hard.

205 3. A numerical average below 60.

254 4. For proven plagiarism, cheating on an examination, or other academic dishonesty.

45 5. Other.

APPENDIX C

A Comparison of the Scholastic Aptitude Test Distribution Scores at Bridgewater State College from 1967 to 1975.

	1967		1968		1969		1970		1971		1972		1973		1974		1975	
STUDENTS (Number)	736		836		998		1052		1055		1014		1020		1102		1200	
SCORE	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %	V. %	M. %
INTERVALS																		
700 - 800	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	01	+	+	+	+	01	+	+	+
600 - 690	09	13	09	15	06	12	11	13	08	14	06	12	06	11	05	09	02	05
500 - 590	41	48	37	46	33	43	37	47	35	45	34	43	28	45	27	35	15	27
400 - 490	50	38	50	35	53	40	46	36	49	36	48	39	51	36	48	44	47	43
300 - 390	00	00	03	03	07	04	05	03	08	03	09	04	11	05	17	09	30	21
200 - 290	00	00	00	00	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Special Cases	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	02	02	03	03	02	02	03	03

+ = Less than 1.0%

APPENDIX D

Contingency Tables

Page 39

Grades - Significant

1976	107	8	4
1972	85	5	6

$X^2 = 1.6602$ (2df)

Grades - Motivate

1976	103	7	9
1972	81	7	8

$X^2 = .2314$ (2df)

Grades - Useful

1976	89	13	16
1972	76	10	10

$X^2 = .5442$ (2df)

Grading with Department

1976	78	31	5
1972	56	26	6

$X^2 = .8083$ (2df)

Grading with College

1976	33	73	8
1972	25	62	2

$X^2 = 2.25597$ (2df)

Expansion of Pass-Fail

1976	44	63	5
1972	33	39	8

$X^2 = 2.6511$ (2df)

Attendance - Grade

1976	43	52	10
1972	38	43	11

$X^2 = .3525$ (2df)

Page 40

A

1976	94	4
1972	84	7

$X^2 = 1.2344$(1df)

B

1976	96	9
1972	79	13

$X^2 = 1.5274$(1df)

C

1976	97	7
1972	78	12

$X^2 = 2.3807$(1df)

D

1976	94	9
1972	80	10

$X^2 = .3048$(1df)

E

1976	90	8
1972	84	6

$X^2 = .1524$(1df)

Page 42

Lower Division

1976	94	92	55	73	40
1972	76	73	69	70	35

$X^2 = 4.6609$ (4df)

Upper Division

1976	110	77	66	53	35
1972	87	57	45	49	34

$X^2 = 2.0742$ (4df)

Page 46

A

1976	122	40	64	95	10	68
1972	102	29	52	83	10	50

X^2 = 2.9952 (5df)

B

1976	119	13	54	86	21	65
1972	100	8	37	69	20	47

X^2 = 1.5402 (5df)

C

1976	122	10	67	70	7	59
1972	88	14	51	52	15	46

X^2 = 7.6949 (5df)

D

1976	82	62	66	96	40	26	48
1972	65	60	53	65	31	37	43

X^2 = 3.2947 (6df)

E

1976	100	114	62	59
1972	79	90	43	49

X^2 = .4705 (3df)

Page 49

Grades - Significant

Students	293	78	21
Faculty	107	8	4

X^2 = 12.8431* (2df)

Grades - Useful

Students	137	230	29
Faculty	89	13	16

X^2 = 81.0971* (2df)

Grades - Motivate

Students	303	73	20
Faculty	103	7	9

X^2 = 11.4673* (2df)

Expansion of Pass-Fail

Students	190	183	23
Faculty	44	63	5

X^2 = 3.5353 (2df)

Classroom

Students	293	84	19
Faculty	36	62	12

X^2 = 64.6561* (2df)

Student Teaching

Students	365	14	15
Faculty	83	9	9

X^2 = 10.2574* (2df)

Page 49 (Con't.)

Field Experience

Students	351	23	20
Faculty	69	11	19

X^2 = 26.6105* (2df)

Attendance

Students	163	207	25
Faculty	43	52	10

X^2 = 1.3443 (2df)

Class Size

Students	356	32	12
Faculty	72	42	4

X^2 = 57.2444* (2df)

Grades - Discussion

Students	164	134	90
Faculty	26	81	7

X^2 = 49.5148* (2df)

Time

Students	267	63	64
Faculty	28	84	7

X^2 = 133.271* (2df)

Page 51

Lower Division

Students	210	237	208	248	217
Faculty	94	92	55	73	40

X^2 = 22.4864* (4df)

Upper Division

Students	168	129	132	139	194
Faculty	110	77	66	53	35

X^2 = 41.5013* (4df)

Page 55

A

Students	205	349	134	247	335	271
Faculty	122	40	64	95	10	68

X^2 = 174.89* (5df)

B

Students	325	170	81	237	395	264
Faculty	119	13	54	86	21	65

X^2 = 134.61* (5df)

C

Students	282	81	197	253	104	239
Faculty	122	10	67	70	7	59

X^2 = 40.00* (5df)

D

Students	179	124	98	221	268	156	210
Faculty	82	62	66	96	40	26	48

X^2 = 78.01*(6df)

Page 55 (Con't.)

	E			
Students	336	183	205	254
Faculty	100	114	62	59

$X^2 = 35.46^*$ (3df)

* Significant difference at the .05 level of significance for 1 Degree of Freedom - 3.84 4; 2 Degrees of Freedom - 5.9914; 3 Degrees of Freedom - 7.8147; 4 Degrees of Freedom - 9.4877; 5 Degrees of Freedom - 11.0705; 6 Degrees of Freedom - 12.5916.